

Amazons Watch

A Publication of the Centre for Economic and Leadership Development

ISSUE 18



THE WOMEN OF THE 2010s DECADE

Breaking Limits & Defining Moments



- Women Entrepreneurs are Still Faced with Under-capitalization and Gender Bias

- Increasing Monetization of Political Party Primaries in Africa, an Impediment to Women Political Representation



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



THE 2020s: RIDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF MATRIARCHS

As the curtains of the 2010s decade, which began on 1 January 2010 and ended 31 December 2019, draw to a close; we are poised to look back in admiration at the giant strides of women who were blessed to lean on and walk on the shoulders of amazing matriarchs of the past decades and centuries like Rosa Parks, Claudette Colvin, Dorothy Height, Sojourner Truth, Ida Wells, etc. These matriarchs of all time journeyed through rough paths, mostly in largely uneven terrains, where they were made to mostly play the second fiddle and excluded from participating in the sacred act of decision making; hence the thought of standing in the role of a decision-maker seemed farfetched and unrealistically reachable.

The gains for the struggles and pains of these matriarchs perhaps can be traced to the underlying concept behind a matriarchal system. According to the matriarchy expert and founder of the International Academy Hagia for Modern Matriarchal Studies, Heide Goettner-Abendroth, "In matriarchies, mothers are at the centre of culture without ruling over other members of society." In Heide's opinion, the idea behind a matriarchy "is not to have power over others and nature, but to follow maternal values, i.e. to nurture the natural, social and cultural life based on mutual respect."

Accordingly, Catherine Edsell, the renowned founder of Matriarch Adventure, likens a true matriarchy to the elephants. In her words: Elephants are "the iconic matriarchs": "In the elephant world, successful matriarchs are not self-appointed leaders of their family; they are leaders because their family respects them, and they are respected because they have proven over the years that they can be trusted to make wise decisions."

Women of wisdom, selfless, charismatic, with seasoned experience gained over years of hard work, doggedness and impact; these are the qualities that the Amazons Watch Magazine has set out to honour in women all over the world who have defied all odds and made a success of themselves and their career through the 2010s decade. Specifically, we celebrate women in the emerging regions of South America, Middle East, Africa and Asia; in our new and latest compendium, which highlights the high points of a few women who lit the stages of the Emerging World, for other women

to clearly see the possibilities in areas less travelled by women.

This first edition of the 2020s decade is packed with inspiring and interesting reads of women like Zhoe Qunfei, the dogged Chinese entrepreneur who rose from many struggles to found the significant touchscreen maker Lens Technology Company in the country. Likewise, the Story of Jean Liu, who rose and soared in a male dominated ICT sphere to be the President of China's largest mobile transportation company and renowned negotiator of jaw-dropping business deals; is one indication of the possibilities available in this new 2020 decade for women who will dare to breakthrough status quos and limitations.

The Amazons Magazine Exclusive interviews with Nana Ama Poku, Deputy CEO Exim Bank Ghana, Reinette Van Der Merwe, Managing Executive, Relationship Banking Products, Absa Group, South Africa, Audrey Joy Grant – Governor, Central Bank of Belize, Luiza Helena Trajano, Chairwoman of the retail chain Magazine Luiza in Brazil, and Rooksana Modan, a seasoned entrepreneur, professional mindset and business Coach in South Africa; highlighted varying timeless insights. However, a common issue that resonates with all the interviews is the issues of transformational women leadership and the need to upscale the participation of women across the board to speed up the rate of development in emerging economies.

As the beginning days of the 2020 decade gradually unfolds, we employ you to sit back and sip in every single detail in this edition.

Likewise, we excitedly ask you to stay with us and subscribe to the Amazons Watch as we aim in this new 2020 decade, to make news out of every woman's glory, story and pain so that as Sheryl Sandberg succinctly put it, we can effectively "raise the floor and the ceiling for women" in emerging economies.

Welcome to the World of Amazons!

Thank you.

Furia Giambi
Publisher/Editor in Chief

THE GLOBAL WOMEN LEADERS HALL OF FAME (GWLHOF)

THIS IS AN UNPRECEDENTED GLOBAL NETWORK OF GREAT WOMEN LEADERS, WHO ARE IMPROVING AND EVOLVING THE SOCIETIES WHICH THEY REPRESENT.

WHAT IS THE HALL OF FAME FOR?

- To preserve the plan of women in history by archiving the told and untold stories of their giant strides.
- To celebrate their untiring and impactful contributions of women to the development of their nations' heritage.
- To connect women from various climes and generations; whilst inspiring the younger generations to dare to dream and unleash their potentials.
- During each annual induction ceremony, inductees will be invited for a forum to discuss and proffer solutions to a common predicament, facing their nations.
- The remarkable woman is the Hall of change agents, pathfinders, stereotype and boundary breakers and most especially, record breakers.

CRITERIA FOR INDUCTION

- Prospective inductees should be a woman and meet 2 or more of the following criteria.
- A pacesetter in her field.
- Made/making an outstanding and evident contribution in their field and nation.
- Changed and upgraded the status of women.
- Set new standards for achievement.
- Responsible for charting a new path and opening doors of opportunities for women and their society.
- An inspiration to others.

SELECTION PROCESS

A team of researchers are responsible for gathering all information of potential inductees. You can join them in making history, by nominating an eligible woman. Send an email to info@celdng-org.

AMAZONS WATCH

... The leading voice for women in developing nations

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While great care has been taken in the receipt and handling of materials, production and accuracy of content in the magazine, the publishers will not accept any omissions, which may occur. The publishers would like to thank all those companies and individuals who took part in the magazine and wish them every success.

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ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

A LEAP TOWARDS
ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS

By Kembet Bolton





Child marriage is a global menace affecting almost every region of the world. It cuts across different cultures, ethnicities and religions. According to a report published by UNICEF, each year, 12 million girls are married before the age of 18. That is, 23 girls every minute and nearly 1 girl every second. It will not be out of place to tag child marriage as a human right emergency as it violates children's rights and places them at high risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse. Child marriage is a core development and human rights issue, which hinders the achievement of key aspects of the sustainable development goals.

What is Child Marriage?

Simply put, child marriage is a marriage of a girl or boy before the age of 18 and refers to both formal marriages and less formal settings where children under the age of 18 live with a partner as if married. This article will look at the impact of child marriage on achieving the sustainable development goals. The Sustainable development goal target 5.3 aims to "eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations" by 2030. This of course is very important for accountability as governments will be forced to uphold their commitments to girls, and track progress on ending child marriage

globally. Let us now look at how child marriage affects most of the SDGs.

No Poverty

Poverty is intimately linked to child marriages. This explains why the highest prevalence of this menace is in Africa and Asia, the two most impoverished regions in the world. Besides being prevalent in the world's most impoverished regions, it is concentrated in the poorest households in these regions as family heads now see it as a way to provide for their young daughters and even benefit other members of the family. This is why girls from poor homes are much more likely to marry before 18 than girls from more affluent families. This union in most cases keeps girls poor as they are deprived of opportunities of education and access to paid employment. Thus, the cycle of poverty is sustained.

Zero Hunger

A family head in West Africa, Nigeria was asked why he gave out his 14 year-old daughter to a man almost his age and without much ado, he simply responded "that's one less mouth to feed." Food insecurity and malnutrition are both causes and consequences of child marriage. Families who struggle to feed will not hesitate to give out a child in marriage

or any other form of domestic help engagement as it reduces the "mouths to feed." A UNICEF report on the link of hunger and child marriages states that child brides usually experience higher rates of malnutrition than girls who marry later in life; this is not unconnected to early and frequent pregnancies. Also, babies born to girls under the age of 15 are at higher risk of dying before their fifth birthday. They are also more likely to have low birth weight, suffer from poor nutrition, and experience stunt growth. Thus, improving food security and nutrition can have lasting impacts on the health and well-being of girls.

Good Health and Well Being

Most men who marry little girls' belief that they are more fertile and have a longer maternity span. Hence, child brides are often under pressure to have many children with little spacing. This, of course, 'put their health at risk as every year, 70,000 adolescent girls in developing countries die of causes related to pregnancy and child birth. The HIV infection rate among married adolescent girls also tends to be higher than among their unmarried, sexually active peers. Delayed marriage means delayed sexual initiation and delayed first births as well as a reduction in incidences of gender-based violence. Child marriage often leads to poor mental health, including feelings of isolation, depression and suicidal thoughts and behaviours. Thus, ending child marriage will improve the health and well-being of young girls.

Inclusive and Quality Education

The relationship between child marriage and lack of education is a vicious cycle. Uneducated girls are three times more likely to marry before 18 than those who have some formal education. The cycle is vicious as it is not clear if the child marriage causes school dropout or if dropping out of school causes child marriage. One thing that is clear though is this; girls tend to drop out of school during the preparatory time before the marriage or shortly after. The role of a wife or mother comes with heavy responsibilities of taking care of the home, children and extended family, responsibilities a young girl

can hardly combine with schooling. Early or child marriage limits a girl's ability to go to school, learn new skills and put the ones she has to use. Many yet to be married girls without any formal education will be married off before 18. Some of these girls are from very poor homes where parents or guardians cannot afford a formal education for their wards, while some of the parents just do not see the need of educating a girl. Still, for those who dropped out of school because of early marriage, returning to school can be very difficult as they are now faced with the responsibility of caring for children, while some cannot face the stigma of being a pregnant student.

Education is one of the most powerful tools to end child marriage and help girls succeed in life! A girl who is in school is less likely to be married before 18. Being in school also makes the girl to be more perceived as a child and hence not suitable for marriage. Above all, educated girls are more prone to having skills and knowledge in order to make more informed decisions concerning their lives.

Gender Inequality

Child marriage is often the result of entrenched gender inequality, making girls disproportionately affected by the practice. Globally, the prevalence of child marriage among boys is just one fifth than among girls. (UNICEF). Norms and stereotypes around gender roles and

marriage age, as well as the socio-economic risk of pregnancy outside of marriage, greatly upholds the practice of child marriage. Parents likely reason that the boys cannot get pregnant at home but the girl can, hence they marry them off early to avoid the stigma of getting pregnant at home which will reduce the economic benefit the parents stand to get if they eventually are able to find a suitor. The consequences of such unions are more devastating for girls and tend to aid gender inequality. Child brides are expected to prove their fertility and bear children soon after marriage, putting them (girls) again at more risk of dying during labour as their bodies are not biologically ready to cope with pregnancy and birth.

Since most child brides are out of school, they have very few employment prospects, they are almost entirely dependent on their often much older husbands. These make girls more vulnerable to being and staying in abusive relationships as they have few or no options to provide for themselves and their children. This breeds inequality in all facets, especially workplace leadership as the boys who had the education will be the ones suitably qualified to fill those roles. Child marriage will always stand in the way of gender equality. Ending child marriage is a very strategic way of tackling gender inequality and shifting the discriminatory norms that perpetuate the act itself. Girls need to be empowered so they

can choose if, when and whom they marry.

Economic Growth

According to the Economic Impacts of Child Marriage research, conducted jointly by The World Bank and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), the biggest economic impacts of child marriage are related to fertility and population growth, education, earnings and the health of children born to young mothers. The study highlights that investments in ending child marriage can help countries achieve multiple development goals.

In the same vein, as has been highlighted earlier, because of the educational state of most child brides, they are less likely to participate in the workforce even as adults. When they have employment, it is usually in a lower skilled and pay cadre. If these girls were allowed to get a proper education, they would develop employable skills that can earn them a job so they can support themselves and their families thus breaking the poverty cycle. Also, through its impact on fertility, population growth and child health, the practice is causing countries trillions of dollars that should have gone into some kind of development.

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

There is truly no peace without justice. The practice of child marriage as highlighted above is an act of injustice to children, especially the girl child. It is a violent act as it violates the fundamental human rights of these young girls. They are exposed to all sorts of treatments at the hands of their partners or in-laws especially when there is a large age difference, which is often the case. The forced sexual initiation and early pregnancies which result from child marriage impact the physical and mental health of these girls throughout their life time. The call to end violence against children will not succeed if the barbaric act of child marriage is allowed to continue.

Ending child marriage is not only the right thing to do, but is also an economically practical decision that can help in achieving half of the sustainable development goals. ■



DRIVING THE NEW ERA OF TECHNOLOGY IN CHINA



The Story
of Jean Liu:
President
of China's
largest mobile
transportation
company

Although the STEM world is unarguably a male-dominated field, there seem to be a foreseen era when the industries will be dominated by women. This can be seen as women

have begun to lead and chair top tech organisations responsible for the manufacture and creation of outstanding innovations that are shaping the modern world and

helping people get through their day-to-day activities with ease. From Mary Barra, the CEO of General Motors (GM), to Jenny Lee Singaporean venture capitalist and managing partner of GGV Capital Shanghai, and Jean Liu Chinese business executive and President of Didi Chuxing, China's largest mobile transportation platform, the list is endless. Their records affirm that women all over the world are working tirelessly towards uplifting the societal status of women while contributing to sustainable development goals.

Jean Liu Qing, is an amazon and a gift to the transportation industry of China. We are compelled to share her story to encourage the younger generation and female entrepreneurs around the world.

Jean Liu Qing was born in 1978 in Beijing, China. She is the daughter of a Chinese businessman and Lenovo founder Liu Chuanzhi, and the granddaughter of Liu Gushu, a senior executive banker at the Bank of China. She received a bachelor's degree in Computer Science from Peking University and a master's degree in Computer Science from Harvard University.

Jean Liu, is a Chinese business executive, the President of Didi Chuxing formerly known as Didi Kuaidi, China's largest mobile transportation company headquartered in Beijing. The company provides app-based transportation services, including taxi hailing, private car-hailing, social ride-sharing and bike-sharing; on-demand delivery services; and automobile services, including sales, leasing, financing, maintenance, fleet operation, electric vehicle charging and co-development of vehicles with automakers.

Prior to Didi Chuxing, Jean joined Goldman Sachs in 2002 as a junior analyst – this was after completing her master's at Harvard. She worked at Goldman Sachs Asia for 12 years, from 2002 to 2014, from a junior analyst she worked her way up to become one of the youngest managing directors in the bank's history in 2012.

Moving to Didi Dache she served as its chief operating officer in July 2014. When Jean joined Didi Dache in 2014, the firm was in fierce and expensive competition with rival Kuaidi



Dache. Together with Cheng Wei, Jean masterminded the company's fundraising and its merger with Kuaidi Dache.

In December 2014, Jean helped Didi Dache to close a USD \$700 million fundraising round, the biggest fundraising record for private companies. Investors include internationally renowned companies, such as Temasek, DST Global and Tencent.

On February 4, 2015, Didi Dache announced at the annual conference that Jean would be the President for Didi Dache and in charge of the day-to-day operation. She is the first person to take up the role of president for the company. On February 14 Didi Dache officially announced its merger with Kuaidi Dache.

In July 2015, Jean led the company to complete a USD \$2 billion fundraising round, bringing the company's cash reserves to over USD \$3.5 billion. This is the world's largest single fundraising round by any private company of all time, as well as the largest fundraising round for Chinese mobile internet companies.

In August 2015, Jean spoke with Jonathan Krim, former Technology Editor at The Wall Street Journal, on the future development of DiDi. She said, "Our philosophy is we don't really believe in disruptive termination. When it concerns millions of people's jobs, and when it concerns tens of millions of people's lives, what we believe in is collaborative reform from within. We try to work with everyone." In the same year, Jean appeared on the October cover of Forbes Asia.

In January 2016, Jean announced on a press briefing that Didi Kuaidi and China Merchants Bank announced a comprehensive strategic partnership to cooperate on a wide range of initiatives, including in-app credit card payments, joint bank cards, automobile financing services, offline driver recruitment and other O2O initiatives. The partnership includes a strategic investment by CMB in Didi Kuaidi.

The new company Didi Kuaidi, which rebranded itself in September 2015 with a new name, Didi Chuxing, soon became one of the largest players in China's ride-sharing market. Jean was named as



the “Top Deal Maker” by The Wall Street Journal for merging Didi Dache and Kuaidi and completing record-breaking fundraising rounds for Didi Chuxing.

She also helped DiDi win a USD \$1 billion investment from Apple in May 2016, giving Apple a strong foothold into the Chinese market and an opportunity for the two to collaborate on product integration and marketing. In an interview with CNBC, Jean discussed how the two companies initiated talks of partnership. When meeting Apple CEO Tim Cook in California the month before the deal, Liu reportedly said that a company named after a fruit could achieve something big. She explained that the company refers to its employees as “oranges” since the company’s registered name—Xiaoju—means “little orange.” The USD \$1 billion investment from Apple was announced 22 days after their first meeting.

DiDi said it closed a USD \$4.5 billion fundraising round that attracted new investors such as Apple, China Life Insurance Co. and the financial affiliate of online shopping firm Alibaba Group

Holding Ltd. This fundraising round is the world’s largest equity share fundraising round by any private company of all time, refreshing the record set by DiDi and Jean.

She also lined up strategic partnerships with other three other car-hailing companies overseas including Lyft (the U.S.), Ola (India) and Grab (Singapore). On August 1, Didi acquired Uber’s China unit.

Since Jean joined DiDi in July 2014, she and Cheng Wei have transformed the Company from a taxi-hailing platform into a diversified business that has become China’s largest comprehensive one-stop mobile transportation platform. Jean is working with Cheng Wei to oversee all the business operations of DiDi, which now offers a full range of mobility options on its app for close to 300 million users across over 400 Chinese cities, including taxi hailing, private car-hailing, Hitch (social ride-sharing), DiDi Chauffeur, DiDi Bus, DiDi Test Drive, DiDi Car Rental and DiDi Enterprise Solutions. As many as 16 million rides were completed on DiDi’s platform on a daily basis in Q2 2016. Every day, DiDi’s platform generates over 70TB data, which is larger than 70,000 feature films, processes more than 9 billion routing requests, and produces over 13 billion locating points. In 2015, DiDi fulfilled 1.43 billion rides, and total riding mileage surpassed 12.8 billion kilometres, which is equivalent to travel around China’s borderline 290,000 times.

It is reported that, in DiDi’s four years of operation, the company has gathered information like common pick up points and destinations, peak demand times, and frequent routes in 400 Chinese cities. It is trying to make full use of the big data for predictive analysis and to create innovative products for smart transportation. According to Jean, at this stage, the company is keen to recruit and retain top talent. Jean makes finding and retaining talent a priority at DiDi. In an interview with Fast Company, she said, “To be a great company you need not just the best product but also the best people. We aim to get the best young talent from many different fields and make sure that they have the feeling that they can have a huge impact.”

Jean currently lives in Beijing with her husband and three children. In October 2015, Jean announced internally that she was being treated for breast cancer at the age of 37. In early December 2015, she posted on her Weibo that she would return to work by the end of December after a two-month treatment. According to DiDi, she is now fine and “has been in an all-in mode for quite some time”.

After being named one of the “50 Most Powerful Moms of 2016” by Working Mother, Jean spoke about how she balanced working for DiDi and the relationship with her three kids.

As a result of her work, Jean has received numerous awards over the years, locally and internationally. Most recently, she was recognized as one of the most influential business leaders in the world by many mainstream media outlets. She was named in the Fortune’s international list of 2016 Most Powerful Women, to mention a few.

Somewhere in our hearts, there is a little tickling of something we can do to make the world a better place. While some persons like Jean Liu Qing are making efforts to satisfy this longing, many are still holding. The story of Jean is a call to every woman that nothing is unobtainable when driven by determination and right focus.

“At the core of us is a desire to do what is right, good, true, and just. The sacrifice is big. The risks are daunting. But the reward is worth it. We have a chance to stand before the world and do what we are called to do: Change the world.” ■



WOMEN WHO LIT THE STAGES OF THE EMERGING WORLD IN THE 2010s DECADE

Like the wrap up of a good movie, you are not likely eager to see the end, the 2010s has finally come to a grand conclusion. There were extra ordinary women who lit up the stages and took part in various game changing scenes of the 2010s decade. There were cameo appearances, co-stars, extras and supporters, whether small or big, they all contributed their bit to make the decade an interesting one for women who looked up to such examples to break through barriers and every proverbial floor and ceiling. In this compendium however, Amazons Watch magazine has compiled a list of leading women from developing nations, who played starring roles and lit the stage, so to speak, in the 2010s decade.

These are women who had outstanding accomplishments within the decade. They meet some or all of the criteria listed below;

Game Changer -Be the impetus for a new idea or thought process that positively influenced her profession or community.

Business Excellence- Must have demonstrated

achievement, growth and success in a self-founded business with significant profit returns.

Political Deviant – Must be a political nonconformist and have a political accomplishment that is deviant from the norm, within the decade.

Innovation – Must have a product (within the decade) that was formulated by her or through her idea.

Sports Excellence – Must have made outstanding achievements in sports or to promote the advancement of women in sports within the 2010's decade.

Gender Advocacy- Must have promoted women's rights and gender equality. Must have made dedicated effort in promoting the principles within the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

We welcome you to meet the women who lit the stage for us in the 2010s decade from the developing regions. Like in a movie sequel, where new characters are introduced, we look forward to having more women from these regions join the list in the 2020s.

SOUTH AMERICA



LUIZA HELENA TRAJANO

Over the last two decades, Luiza Trajano has transformed her family business Magazine Luiza, from a retail store in Franca to a chain of more than 800 stores, spread into 16 Brazilian states. Trajano also leads Grupo Mulheres do Brasil (Women of Brazil Group).



SYLVIA ESCOVAR GOMEZ

She leads the largest gasoline and oil derivatives retailer in Colombia. Mrs. Escovar worked in Terpel for 10 years as VP of the Corporate Group both in the financial and the strategic/commercial areas.



H.E. PAULA-MAE WEEKES ORTT

She is the first woman to hold the office of President of Trinidad and Tobago. Paula-Mae Weekes worked in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions as State Counsel for eleven years. She was appointed a Judge at the Criminal Division of Trinidad's High Court in 1996.



**TAWAKKOL
ABDEL-SALAM
KARMAN**

Served as Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Panama from July 01, 2014 to July 01, 2019. She was the first woman to hold both positions in the history of her country.



IRIS FONTBONA

She is a Chilean billionaire businesswoman. Over the last decade Iris Fontbona has been recognized for her philanthropic activities and numerous contributions that support women and children across South America.



**MARÍA
ASUNCIÓN
ARAMBURUZABALA**

María Asunción is a Mexican businesswoman. She cofounded Tresalia Capital in order to diversify the family investments, and through Tresalia, she has made several investments in large Mexican companies.



**LUZ MARIA
CORREA VARGAS**

She is the President of Construcciones El Condor S.A. one of Colombia's largest infrastructure development companies.



DR. HAYAT SINDI

An engineer best known for leading the Panama Canal Expansion Project as Executive Vice President for Engineering in the Panama Canal Authority. Espino de Marotta was appointed to the role of EVP in 2012 and was the first woman in the history of the Panama Canal Authority to hold the role.



**PATRICIA
ESPINOSA
CANTELLANO**

Mexican politician and diplomat who is currently serving as the executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. She was Mexican Ambassador to Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Slovakia.



**ROSARIO
CÓRDOBA**

Independent Non-Executive Chairwoman Grupo Argos, and CEO, Private Council for Competitiveness



ISABEL NOBOA

Founder and CEO of the Nobis Consortium, one of the largest business groups in Ecuador, which comprises agricultural, real estate, industrial, commercial, and tourism businesses. She is considered one of the most prominent women entrepreneurs in Latin America, and is known for philanthropic initiatives.



**MAYRA
GONZÁLEZ**

President and Managing Director of Nissan Mexicana (NMEX), Mayra is the first ever female executive ever to be appointed the president of a country within the Nissan Group, and also the youngest person to assume this position in the history of the company.



**OLGA GONZALEZ
APONTE**

CFO; Wal-Mart de México Gonzalez took the reins of Wal-Mart de Mexico's finances in July 2017. Before, she was the VP of commercial finance and operations. Gonzalez has been in the company since 2010.



**AIMEE SENTMAT DE
GRIMALDO**

The President and CEO of Banistmo, the second largest bank in Panama and is part of Grupo Bancolombia, one of the strongest financial groups in Latin America. She is the only woman in Panama leading a systemic bank.



**H.E MRS. LEILA
EL SOLH HAMADE**

Cooper is the Peruvian finance minister since September 2017. She is also an economic advisor to Andino Investment Holding and an external consultant of the Inter-American Development Bank.

AFRICA



ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF

She became the Liberian President and the first democratically-elected female president on the African continent. She is Liberia's 24th president and has successfully won two terms in office.



JOICE MUJURU

Vice President between 2004 and 2014. Mujuru deputized Robert Mugabe, and she was the Vice President of ZANU-PF as well; in fact, she was appointed Vice President after the death of Simon Muzenda. She also previously served in various government institutions and was once considered to be President Robert Mugabe's successor.



HE AMEENAH FIRDAUS GURIB-FAKIM CCKS

First and Only Woman to Ever Hold the Title of President of Mauritius



SAHLE-WORK ZEWEDE

Sahle-Work Zewde is the current President of Ethiopia and the first woman to hold the office. A career diplomat, she was elected president unanimously by members of the Federal Parliamentary Assembly on 25 October 2018.



CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE

Nigerian Feminist, Novelist, and Author who is known as a fierce campaigner for equal gender rights and women empowerment. Adichie has been involved in several political movements and campaigns against sexual violence including the #metoo movement.



BETHLEHEM ALEMU

Founder, Sole Rebels, which provides eco-friendly, fair trade jobs to her community. Her firm converts tires into smart shoes. Sole Rebels has been expanding rapidly since its founding and currently, it has 18 stores around the world.



FAYELLE OUANE

Ouane is the co-founder of Suguba, a platform that fosters regional integration to develop robust entrepreneurial ecosystems in West Africa. In the next decade, Ouane hopes to see an Africa being valued for what it can teach the rest of the world instead of being referred to as a "charity case".



SALMA SEETAROO

An extraordinary figure in Africa through investment and sheer determination. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, she hopes to grow fibre optics to reach the poorest of the poor through education and health access.



MIMI KALINDA

Kalinda is an accomplished author and co-founder of Africommunications Group (ACG), a pan-African public relations firm that aims to give the poor of Africa a voice.



OUMA LAOUALI

In October 2015, Lieutenant Laouali, aged 28, made history as she became the first woman pilot in Nigeria. "female pilots challenge sexist views that men are better suited as pilots."



ANGELA KYEREMATEN-JIMOH

First female to become country director of IBM in Africa.



MAGDA WIERZYCKA

She is the co-founder and CEO of Sygnia Ltd, a financial services company. She is the richest woman in South Africa, and is also known for her anti-corruption activism. She became Sygnia's CEO in 2016 and since then, there has been no looking back for Wierzycka.



OYEYIMIKA ADEBOYE

Managing Director of Cadbury Nigeria Plc

First Woman to hold the position since its establishment over 5 decades ago.



NATALIE BITATURE-MUSANA CARTS

With a price point of \$400, each Musana Cart saves 3,000 tons of carbon emissions and improves the health of cities by eliminating pollution from charcoal and kerosene stoves. It is safe to call her the young Africa Innovator of the decade.



ALENGOT OROMAIT

Proscovia Alengot Oromait made history in 2012 by becoming the youngest individual in Africa, and globally, to be elected as a Member of Parliament. At only 19, Alengot won the Usuk County with 54.2% of the vote.

ASIA



LUCY PENG

She is one of the founders of the e-commerce company Alibaba Group. As of March 2017, Peng was one of 21 self-made women billionaires in China.

From January 2010 to February 2013, Peng was the CEO of Alipay.



EIKO KIMURA

Eiko Kimura made headlines when she won the election for Japan's upper house for two reasons, one being that she is a woman and two suffers severe disability due to cerebral palsy. She attends parliamentary sessions on bed-like wheelchairs.



ZHANG XIN

Dubbed "the woman who built Beijing," real-estate magnate Zhang Xin is now worth over \$3 billion. But life was very different when she was growing up in communist China during the Cultural Revolution.



SOMRUEDEE CHAIMONGKOL

Thailand's Somruedee Chaimongkol made waves when the founder of Banpu, Chanin Vongkusolkiet stepped down as CEO of Banpu and named her as the successor. Many of Banpu's assets remain in coal, earning Somruedee the nickname "Asia's First Lady of Coal."



SABRINA CHAO

Hong Kong's Chao was named chairman of the Hong Kong Shipowners Association in 2015, the first woman in its 59-year history to hold the position. The group's close to 190 members control and manage a fleet of more than 2,100 ships.



CAO THI NGOC DUNG

Vietnam's Cao founded Phu Nhuan Jewelry while she was still a state employee. Starting with one store, she built PNJ into the biggest jewelry brand in Vietnam, with over 3,000 employees and 200 stores. For 2015 PNJ reported revenue of \$350 million and profit of \$23 million.



CHEW GEK KHIM

Chew reigns as Singapore's "Businessman" of the Year, the first woman tapped for the honor in a decade. Chew's investment firm has stakes in real estate, hospitality and resources, and 2015 annual revenue of \$389.9 million.



YUWADEE CHIRATHIVAT

Thailand's leading shopping center company rang up growth in 2015, both at home and abroad. Yuwadee heads the retail division of this historic family company and continued its Thai expansion with 2 new Central stores and 3 more Robinson department stores.



AMBIGA DHIRAJ

Dhiraj made history when she became the first female boss of an Indian-owned tech unicorn when she took over as CEO of Mu Sigma from her husband, Dhiraj Rajaram who founded the firm in 2004.



NGUYEN THI PHUONG

Co founder and Chairman, Sovico Holdings Vietnam



THET THET WAI

Thet Thet Wai lifts weights at her gym in Yangon. She recently became one of many internet celebrities leading the campaign to advocate for the death sentence for rapists. Thet Wai quit her public relations job to train full time for Myanmar's female bodybuilding competition.



LORRAINE BELO-CINCOCHAN

Since this leading home-improvement and building-products retailer went public in March 2017, Belo-Cincochan has led the family business on its most aggressive expansion yet.



DANG MINH PHUONG

Dang is a scrappy player in Vietnam's underdeveloped but fast-growing logistics market. She has built MP Logistics providing forwarding and logistics services, mostly to Japanese companies, as well as air and ocean freight, warehousing and project cargo.



CHRISTINA GAW

Christina Gaw joined Gaw Capital in 2008, three years after her brothers Goodwin and Kenneth founded it. The trio acquire underperforming assets such as office buildings, hotels, and retail centers, refurbishing and repositioning them for a tidy profit.



HU WEIWEI

Hu pedaled her way to a windfall when she sold her bike-sharing app, the world's largest, to Meituan Dianping in a cash-and-stock deal widely reported to total \$2.7 billion.

MIDDLE EAST



MONA YOUSIF ALMOAYYED

She is a renowned Businesswoman, Philanthropist, Environmentalist and Women's Rights Campaigner who serves as the Managing Director of one of Bahrain's oldest conglomerates Y.K Almoayyed and Sons. Mona is a member of the board of directors for BMMI and Ebda Bank amongst many other companies.



SHAIKHA AL-BAHAR

Shaikha Al-Bahar is the CEO of the National Bank of Kuwait. She is also on the board of the International Bank of Qatar. She was ranked as the 85th most powerful woman in the world by Forbes in 2012. Al-Bahar was ranked as the 8th most powerful Arab woman of 2012 by Arabian Business.



DRA. AMAL ABDULLAH AL QUBAIS

Amal Al Qubaisi is currently the President of the Federal National Council. She is the first female leader of a national assembly in the United Arab Emirates and the Arab world. Before holding the position, she was the chairwomen of the Abu Dhabi Education Council.



**TAWAKKOL
ABDEL-SALAM
KARMAN**

Yemeni journalist, politician, and human rights activist. She leads the group “Women Journalists Without Chains,” which she co-founded in 2005



RANDA AYOUBI

Founder and CEO of Rubicon Group Holding, a global company. She serves on the board of trustees of the King’s Academy and the Queen Rania Foundation for Education and Development.



**JOSEPHINE
HADDAD**

The first female to fly a Boeing 737-800 plane for the local airline Iraqi Airways since it took the skies in 1949, making her Iraq’s first ever female pilot. Setting the pace for Iraqi women in aviation.



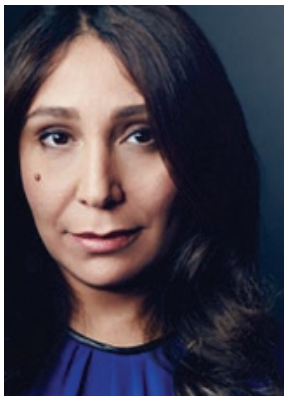
**H.E SHEIKHA
LUBNA BINT
KHALID BIN
SULTAN AL QASIMI**

An Emirati politician. She was the first woman to hold a ministerial post in the United Arab Emirates.



DR. HAYAT SINDI

Founder and CEO of i2 Institute for imagination and ingenuity, and one of the first female members of the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia. She became famous for making significant contributions to point-of-care medical testing and biotechnology.



**HAIFAA AL-
MANSOUR**

Her feature debut, Wadjda was selected as the Saudi Arabian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 86th Academy Awards, which is the first time Saudi Arabia has submitted a film for the Best Foreign Language Oscar.



**FATIMA OBAID AL
JABER**

Excellence in Business, she was the first Emirati woman to be elected to the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce board of directors. Prior to her appointment as COO of the Al Jaber Group, she held a career in the Abu Dhabi Municipality public works department.



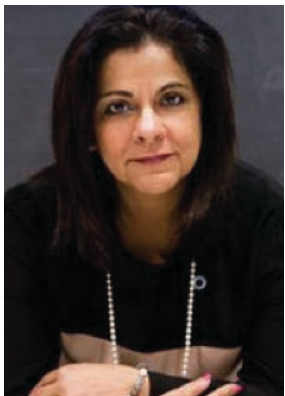
**DR. ISMAHANE
ELOUAFI**

Director General of the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture – UAE. She is recognized for her work on promoting neglected and underutilized crops, use of non-fresh water in agriculture, and empowerment of women in science



**DR AMINA AL
ROSTAMANI**

She has held various strategic positions as a business leader in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and she is the Director and Board Member of AW Rostamani Group, which employs over 3,800 persons in the region.



**MRS. RENUKA
JAGTIANI**

Chairwoman and CEO of the fashion brand, Landmark Group. Since then, she has steered the brand from a single outlet in Dubai, to become an international fashion giant, with over 96 Splash stores and 58 brand boutiques, spread across UAE, and the world.



MANAL AL-SHARIF

Manal al-Sharif is a Saudi women’s rights activist who helped start a women’s right to drive campaign in 2011. Foreign Policy, Time, and the Oslo Freedom Forum have recognized her work.



**H.E MRS. LEILA
EL SOLH HAMADE**

The Vice President of Alwaleed bin Talal Humanitarian Foundation, she served as the minister of industry in then prime minister Omar Karami’s cabinet from 2004 to 2005, making her one of the early woman ministers in Lebanon.

SHOWCASE
SUCCESSFUL
FEMALE LEADERS
TO INSPIRE
THE YOUNGER
GENERATION



Nana Ama-poku

Nana Ama Poku is the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Ghana Exim Bank with oversight responsibility for the Business and Banking Division of the Bank. Embedded in her role also, is the need for a focus on SME development. In this interview with Amazons watch magazine, Mrs. Poku tells of the significant strides made by the bank in SME development and lots more. Excerpts:

Prior to joining the EXIM Bank in March 2017, you were the Head of Financial Institutions at First Atlantic Bank Limited where you promoted financial inclusion through nurturing relationships with Non- Bank financial institutions including Insurance Companies and Savings and Loans institutions. How would you describe the level of financial inclusions in Africa's financial institutions?

The role entailed managing the Bank's relationships and financing support extended to all the various tiers of Non Bank Financial Institutions. These included Microfinance companies, Finance Houses, Savings and Loans institutions, General and Life insurance companies, Pension Fund Managers, Credit Unions, Cooperatives among others. Though regulated by the Central Bank, these institutions required access to relatively cheaper funds for on lending.

The Global Findex Database in 2018 collected data from 144 countries including Ghana. Situating it within the Ghanaian context, the report indicated that Ghanaian adults with access to financial service account had increased from 29% in 2011 to 58% in 2017.

The report indicated that seven million Ghanaians still did not have a bank account; and that the country's formal banking industry was still struggling with the challenge of decreasing the unbanked population.

In my view, financial inclusion is still a challenge due to a number of reasons. These include the following:

1. Most business/ project promoters do not have appropriate collateral that would give potential lenders the needed fall back comfort.
2. Potential customers more often than not do not possess appropriate identification documents in line with KYC/Anti Money Laundering requirements for account opening.

3. Most potential projects are green fields/start-ups. Most financial institutions do not have the appetite to absorb the risk of lending to same.

4. Some financial institutions are averse to supporting specific projects. These could include some engaged in agricultural production and manufacturing.

5. Relatively high interest rates attached to facilities offered by financial institutions.

To bridge the gap therefore, there is the need for awareness creation spearheaded and supported by financial institutions across the African continent on how to address some of the above mentioned issues and more.

What is the role of the EXIM Bank in helping small businesses succeed in Ghana?

The President of Ghana, His Excellency President Akufo-Addo in 2018 outlined a ten point agenda to drive the country's socio economic development and industrial transformation. The Ghana EXIM Bank, as a development one plays a key role in implementing Government policy, thereby nurturing and supporting small businesses to thrive in the local and export business spaces.

The Bank supports businesses taking into consideration three key benchmarks of employment creation, value addition and foreign exchange generation. The reach of the Bank is not limited to start ups/small businesses but also to Agricultural production, Agro processing and Manufacturing sectors of the economy.

In implementing the Ghana Government's "One District One Factory Policy", the Bank focuses on subsectors such as garment and apparel manufacturing, shea nut aggregation (for processing and export), cassava production, poultry production, and pineapple production among others.

Many small businesses play pivotal roles in the various value chains: for example shea cosmetic producers/manufacturers have their raw material for production being aggregated shea by various clusters of women in Northern Ghana.

The Bank's support for small businesses is in the area of:

- Concessionary financing
- Advisory services

“One must always remember that naturally, men do not like their egos bruised. So I tend to show them respect while at the same time being the supervisor.”

- Capacity building training
- Sponsorship to various international fairs to enhance access to off takers among others.

The Bank also has the Grass Root Initiative for Development (GRID), a programme that aims to promote women entrepreneurs. These include the Green House Project (aimed at introducing and setting up young graduates to start farming in Green Houses).

Embedded in your role as Deputy CEO of the Ghana EXIM Bank is the need for a focus of SME development. How is that coming up and have you recorded any successes especially relating to women in SMEs?

The Ghana EXIM Bank has made significant strides in the SME space with the Bank extending support to promoters in over 40 sub sectors including floriculture, soap manufacturing, fruit juice processing, biscuit manufacturing. The potential of women entrepreneurs is enhanced in this regard.

The Association of Apparel and Garment Manufacturers (AGAM) which membership is 90% women has the Ghana EXIM Bank as a key financing partner for its export operations and capacity building programmes.

The Bank's Shea Empowerment Initiative (SEI) has seen financing support for 1,200 women collectors in the Northern Regions of Ghana and 15 shea cosmetic manufacturers engaged in export (who are all women).

The 'Women In Export' (WIE) programme has also seen financing support for budding female entrepreneurs.

The Bank has an SME Department that focuses on financing support for feasible projects and ensures monitoring and advisory services for same. Attention is paid to business development strategies and networking of Women Entrepreneurs as they try to build synergies with other promoters in other fields of endeavour.

A 2014 report by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) stated that women often bear the brunt of poverty and limited access to economic opportunities, due to unfavourable access to financing. As a professional with years of experience in the

finance sector, what are your thoughts on addressing and improving women's access to financing?

According to the World Population Review 2019, of the 26,652,767 people in Ghana, 49.1% are women.

I believe that the livelihood of women across the continent could be greatly improved if the awareness could be created in women entrepreneurs and potential ones about the following:

- The need to understand the dynamics of their projects/business.

- The need to borrow appropriate amounts ie not more or less than needed.

- The need to repay loans so that the track record is built for substantial amounts to be borrowed subsequently.

- The need for capacity building to remain relevant in business.

- How to determine which financing is appropriate for which business.

I also believe it is a two way street and financial institutions across the continent could also enhance women's access to financing by considering the following among others:

- Offering credit facilities that deemphasize collateral and focus on the viability and sustainability of projects.

- Linking specific facilities to specific projects, for example grants to women engaged in production of specific crops, fruits etc.

- Concessionary financing for women.

- Organising capacity building workshops and clinics to ensure continuous training for women entrepreneurs.

Further, as has been reiterated by leaders across the continent, education is key to making a woman as empowered as she could possibly be to enable her improve her livelihood and that of her family. An educated woman would be able to put together feasible and realistic business proposals which would make her project attractive to potential lenders.

According to the World Economic Forum's 2018 Global Gender Gap Index, it will take 135 years to bridge the gender gap in Sub Sahara Africa. What

An educated woman would be able to put together feasible and realistic business proposals which would make her project attractive to potential lenders.

steps do you advise can be taken to tear down gender barriers on the Continent?

Tearing down gender barriers would require a paradigm shift. There is the need to encourage the girl child to get educated. There is also the need to encourage more women to take up leadership positions in Government and in the Corporate world.

There should be improvement and a critical look at some cultural beliefs, norms, and socialization that inhibit women. The girl child must be given the same opportunity at education and leadership as the boy child.

Traditional institutions in Africa have over the years emphasised the domestic role of the girl child. The effects of this perception, though engraved in the minds of many across the continent, could be minimised through education.

Impediments to the realisation of the full potential of women such as early marriage must be discouraged. Girls who fall pregnant at teenage must be given the opportunity of returning to school post-delivery.

In Ghana, the Government in 2017 launched the free Senior High School policy towards the achievement of Goal 4 of the SDGs which states that "by 2030, all boys and girls should complete free equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes".

In Government and in the corporate world, the record of accomplishment of successful women leaders must be showcased to inspire the younger female generation. In this regard, the efforts of the Centre for Economic and Leadership Development (CELD) must be emulated by other agencies and organisation across the globe.

Governments across Africa must give competent women the opportunity to lead various Departments and Agencies to serve as a reminder that women could be great leaders when encouraged and supported.

Despite the entry of women into leadership across all climes, women still face the challenge of getting into higher echelons of leadership into private and public sectors; while those who have risen to that level of leadership are most times whisked out before the expiration of their tenure. Please share with us, some of your experiences in breaking

through these diverse barriers.

Growing up, I always heard the popular saying "it is a man's world" from so many quarters. I still hear it now. It is a constant reminder that there is no space for a woman at the top, whether in Government or in the corporate world.

As a result of this, it appears as if women leaders do not 'survive or last' at the top.

Personally, I took a cue from the above and adopted a consensus building style of leadership that has worked throughout my Banking career.

I listen, I seek the opinion of all my staff irrespective of grade or rank when decisions have to be made. Over time, I have observed that when a leader allows this to happen, the entire team feels part of the decision making process and implementation is easier.

As regards supervising male colleagues, I always remember to seek their views and address challenges they may have. One must always remember that naturally, men do not like their egos bruised. So I tend to show them respect while at the same time being the supervisor. It is a delicate balance.

Above all else, I give credit where due by acknowledging and rewarding hard work.

How do you balance your family and business life?

Banking is very challenging. The stress, late closing hours and the need for passion for one's duty make it hard work.

At the executive management level, all the issues magnify because at this level, you are managing the entire profitability, loan portfolio, customer service etc of a Bank.

Being a woman, there is also the need to make your family priority and be there for them at all times. I am lucky to have family that understands the demands of my work and are tolerant when I have to be away from home or close late.

My hectic schedule notwithstanding, I always ensure that I make time for my family...I do not miss quality time, church and holidays with them.

You have recently been endorsed by the Board of Centre for Economic and Leadership Development to be conferred with the Global Leadership



Excellence Award as well as inducted into the Global Women Leaders Hall of Fame. How do you feel about these honours?

I am humbled to receive these honours.

They are actually proof that hard work and passion for results do not go unnoticed.

I am encouraged that through these awards and endorsements, other women would be encouraged for greater heights in what is generally 'a man's world'. Being at the top and staying there for a woman comes with tenacity of purpose and focus and prayer.

I would continue to give off my very best effort to the Ghana EXIM Bank in particular and Ghana in general. I would like to say a very big thank you to his Excellency President Akufo Addo for the faith and confidence in me and for giving me the opportunity to serve.

What is the best way for readers of Amazons Watch Magazine to connect with you?

I can be reached on linkedin or via mail on napoku@eximbankghana.com.

Thank you

A COMMITMENT TO GIVING

By Miracle Nwankwo



When I think of philanthropy, I think Asian women because the two are inseparable. Asian women are naturally given to philanthropy and for every height attained, every fame gained and every money made, at the root of their aims and objectives is “the needy”.

Asian women have gone beyond meeting material needs to administering career support to people

most especially women in Asia. A large number of stories have been written about Asian women and their philanthropic activities which are inspiring and mind-blowing. Amongst these accounts is the story of Atsuko Toko Fish, a 73-year-old Japanese, whose river of accomplishments runs deep and wide, rooting into the lives of people.

Fish a devoted advocate of women issues is the founder of the Japanese Women's Leadership Initiative (JWLI), formed to assist women entrepreneurs to travel to the United States and learn directly from successful nonprofit organizations and social enterprises on how to become leaders.

A decade ago when Fish started the JWLI program, she could barely recruit fellows to attend the weeks-long US initiative, however as years rolled by there was good turn-ups and in 2017 over 40 people applied for just four positions.

Fish who is now a retired US-Japan cross-cultural consultant and a board member of the U.S.-Japan Council, attributes her success story to the candid advice of her family to travel out of Japan, learn English, and experience life outside her home country.

Her journey to this international phase began as an executive assistant at the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ). When she started, she knew nothing about the American business world, but she had favour with people who gave her more room for improvement, even though she made a lot of mistakes.

In 1999, Fish and her husband Lawrence K. established the Fish Family Foundation, a private family foundation located in Boston, Massachusetts, to formalize the family's tradition of its responsibility to improve its community and to share the joy of giving with future generations.

Her husband, Larry, has been a huge source of support to her throughout her career, providing valuable business insight and quality advice to her, he often advised her to speak up and own her opinions.

Through her association with several public and private organizations, plus her involvement

in global health initiatives, advancing women's role in society and providing support for immigrants and disaster victims, her career skyrocketed.

She has served on several boards including the U.S.-Japan Council and the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (ATASK), where she served for over 10 years.

One of the major ingredients that spiced up her role as a board member over the years, was her ability to always give careful attention to the organization's needs and think of best ways to make a difference as a board member; this singled her out and made her the go-to-person when the need arises for a board member.

Being on the board of ATASK which was her first time serving as a board member, was a life-changing experience for Fish. One other great experience was serving on the board of organizations, such as Management Sciences for Health, building public health systems in developing countries. She experienced great joy and overwhelming emotion and it was an eye-opener for Fish as a Japanese, since Japan residents are rarely exposed to environments lacking in reliable access to healthcare.

For her dedicated service, Fish has received numerous awards over the years, in Japan and the United States. Two current awards received by Fish include the Foreign Minister's Commendation from Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in September 2012 and the Asian American Pacific Islander women "Champion of Change" by the White House in May 2013.

Receiving an award from the White House was gold for Fish who had always wanted to work for Obama. Speaking about America, Fish said it is an open, inclusive, encouraging place and she feels lucky to be there. America gave her opportunities. "This is still the country where dreams come true," she tells the press.

Although retired from the U.S.-Japan Council Fish still works with the JWLI program as well as the Fish Family Foundation. Together with her husband, they have achieved a measurable amount of their goals set while establishing the foundation which is to support



human service organizations helping low-income working families, with a particular emphasis on aiding immigrants.

The foundation has been a great support to a Japan program at the Boys and Girls Club of Boston, providing a one-year course on Japanese culture and language lessons for the inner-city children after which they are sent to Japan as a reward for hard work. The Foundation also helped some 4,000 Green Card holders become US citizens.

We can go on and on to give accounts of the Fish's lifetime achievement in the course of her philanthropic journey. Women like Fish have made the world a better place with their efforts to ease the struggle of humanity. Her selfless contributions in the United States and Japanese society cannot be taken for granted. Fish is one of the powerful women in the world with a lifestyle to mirror after.

According to Victoria Justice, "Power... is the ability to make a change positively."■



Audrey Grant

WOMEN

THE MOST UNDERTAPPED RESOURCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

An old and reverberated cliché - "Women represent the least valued and the most under-tapped resource," remains true today as it was in time past. The US executive and author Sheryl Sandberg could not have put it better when she said "We must raise both the ceiling and the floor" in our struggle to get more women to the top. "When women access their rightful opportunities, when their talents are made to shine without hesitation, when they have access to education, training and finance when their standing is

determined by results and not gender, the effect will be spectacularly transformative, and will represent a return on investment beyond what is imagined by the most progressive amongst us.”

This powerful and convincing case for gender diversity and inclusion as well as other matters of importance were highlighted in this inspirational and exclusive Amazons Watch Magazine interview with Ambassador Audrey Joy Grant, a very seasoned leader whose influence and impact span across the Americas and Europe. Excerpts;

You have held several international leadership positions and served your country in different capacities, as an Ambassador, a Senator, the country’s first Minister of Energy, Science & Technology and Public Utilities, and Governor of the Central Bank of Belize; positions which are not often held by women in many developing nations. Kindly share with us some of your experiences in your career journey, breaking through these diverse barriers, and some of the steps that could be taken to assist women in these regions assume leadership positions.

Early in my executive journey, I determined that performance and results were my best advocates. I strove, therefore, to attain excellence so that the traditional gender barriers could not be justified by my naysayers. Thankfully, in my home, in the classroom and in my circle of influencers, there was a common focus on over-achievement which, in most instances, will erase the pretext for gender discrimination. That is not to say that I was not made to feel, and sometimes even told, that my lofty pursuits were beyond the acceptable boundaries of my gender, and in other instances both gender and nationality. Gender barriers, inherently artificial and unjust, cannot withstand the force of a results-oriented professional.

Foremost for our region’s women is the need for opportunity – early child care, education, the chance for specialty training, for university and higher education slots. To a great extent, from a legal standpoint, much progress has been made to

flatten the professional playing field. But, to continue with this analogy, to critique women’s quality of play while depriving them of the facilities and tools to excel, is both regressive and duplicitous. State and private sector alike must confront the vestigial hurdles women face, in every strata of the workplace, at entry and board room levels. And more can be done in the realm of communications, especially now with the breadth and effectiveness of social media platforms, to call out cases of discrimination and exalt the achievements of women. “She-ros”, as Maya Angelou reminded us, should be recognized and celebrated.

One of the standout features of your term as the Central Bank Governor of Belize is the stability of the economy. Largely an agro-based, export-driven economy there are still lingering concerns about how the fluctuation in the prices of these commodities largely affects the country. What are the corrective measures in place to check this?

The most important function of the Central Bank of Belize (CBB) is to protect our fixed exchange rate, which has been and remains the singular sentinel for stability and prosperity in our country. Managing our foreign exchange structure, then, is a delicate balancing act, ensuring the smooth inflow of FDI, facilitating currency outflows for vital inputs and machinery and equipment for our productive sector, ensuring external debt-service capacity for the Government and protecting the purchasing power of the Belize citizenry. Thereafter, financial sector sturdiness is a crucial calling for our CBB, enforcing prudential standards, harnessing a modern payments system, acting as lender of last resort, and most recently, coordinating a viable deposit insurance system.

Belize has a mixed economic system which includes a private-enterprise system, combined with centralized economic planning and government regulation. How convenient and appealing has foreign direct investment being with this system?

Foreign Direct Investment’s (FDI) quest for higher returns is

“

Foremost for our region’s women is the need for opportunity – early child care, education, the chance for specialty training, for university and higher education slots

overrated; stability of returns, even if more modest is also crucial to the wise global investor. As the Great Recession of 2008 so vividly illustrated, only the state, and state sponsored institutions can serve as ultimate guardians of the economic system. This is not to suggest that our investment framework – laws, FDI incentives and the overall architecture of free market capitalism – is not designed to maximize investor and shareholder returns. I simply underscore that our “mixed economy” has brought some balance to the creation and distribution of wealth.

Gender mainstreaming is one of the cardinal objectives of the Amazons Watch Magazine. With your position as the country’s chief financial regulator, how much effort is put into this, seeing that it is a global concern?

For some time now in Belize, major policy decisions, initiatives and laws are subject to a thorough assessment of their gender implications. In fact, the first dedicated Cabinet portfolio for Women’s Affairs emerged almost 30 years ago. Despite this and other groundbreaking steps, the participation of women at the higher echelons of politics and business remains inadequate and thus, our advocacy effort continue.

A 2014 report by the International Finance Corporation – IFC stated that Women often bear the brunt of poverty and limited access to economic opportunities, due to unfavourable access to financing; as an expert in innovative financial mechanisms with extensive experience in conservation and sustainable development in developing countries what are your thoughts on addressing and improving women’s accessing to financing?

Indeed, enhanced access to financing for women is a proven contributor to growth and development. Currently, the CBB is the lead coordinator for Belize’s first National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS), suffusing with fresh optimism the proponents of gender mainstreaming, since there are various efforts in the Strategy to measurably improve women’s financial literacy and their capacity

to access financing--both for personal betterment as well as for business enterprise. The mission for better financial access has also led us to various collaborative actions with the banks and credit unions within our financial sector.

Concerning one of your core mandates which is the promotion of credit and economic growth, we would like to mirror the Grameen Bank’s success in Bangladesh. The women in those rural areas when empowered were found to accelerate the poverty eradication programs. Are there policies that encourage the financial empowerment of women particularly in your country?

Grameen’s model has long been an inspiration to so many of us in the region. While an exact replication of Grameen has not emerged in Belize, a unique feature of our financial sector is the profile and footprint of membership credit unions that together, hold more than a quarter of national deposits. The participation of women as Credit Union members, and the predominance of women in credit union management, including the high profile woman founder and manager of the country’s largest credit union, has meant ample and competitively priced financing for women across our country. Our recently launched NFIS will build upon this success.

It is said in social and secular circles that women are better planners. The positions of Governor and Deputy at the Central Bank of Belize are occupied by women. What does this mean to the women in this country?

Symbols of success are inspirational for any group that has endured discrimination. Women thus benefit from role models, from the specter of current, living, relatable instances of triumph. The CBB is not unique in this regard, though. The glass ceiling has been shattered in Parliament, the Civil Service, the private sector, major NGOs, the Judiciary, to mention just a few areas where women continue to excel in our society.

The 2019 edition of the Amazons Watch Magazine and Centre for Economic and Leadership Development’s



SAMEAWS, is themed Developing Female Transformational Leaders: A New Paradigm for Growing Emerging Economies. We’d crave your indulgence for a preamble. We are looking at the Business Case for Gender Lens Investing, as one of the key sessions of the summit. As a panelist in this session and one who has had the apex-level experience in the investment world, what are those sentiments that derail the efforts of women in the investment circle?

I would posit that women, as a resource for development, represent the least valued and the most under-tapped. The US executive and author Sheryl Sandberg is right: our struggle is as much about raising the floor as it is about shattering the ceiling. When women access their rightful opportunities, when their talents are made to shine without hesitation, when they have access to education, training and finance, when their standing is determined by results and not gender, the effect will be spectacularly transformative, and will represent a return on investment beyond what is imagined by the most progressive amongst us. ■

WARDROBE WARS BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEENAGERS

TIPS FOR FINDING A MIDDLE GROUND

By Kembet Bolton



The issue of dressing and grooming causes a lot of skirmish between parents and their teenagers. Teenagers might see a certain fashion style as comfortable and adorable while it comes off as sloppy and provocative to their parents. So how can you declare a cease fire when wardrobe wars arise? Can parents and teenagers reach a compromise? In this edition of wardrobe wars, we take some tips from Lisa Damour, A psychologist and Author of *Untangled: Guiding Teenage Girls through the Seven Transitions into Adulthood*.

Offer Calm Feedback - If you are really unhappy about your teen's navel-baring shirt, for instance, Damour suggests you'll have the greatest effect approaching the discussion from a dispassionate position. "Teenagers don't always understand how things are coming off," she says. "A nice first step is to give them kind of collegial feedback. You can say, 'You should be prepared that that shirt might bring extra attention your way. I just don't want you to be surprised by that.'"

Find Your Family's Middle Ground- Where the conversation goes from there depends a lot on your

individual family's norms. Some parents can get away with saying, "You're not allowed to wear that," and others might give more leeway. "As with most ways of parenting, there are a lot of ways to get this right," says Damour. "The way to get it wrong is to just lay down the law without trying to understand each other's positions or to say nothing at all when it is clear that your teenager is wearing something grossly inappropriate."

Try a Mutual Veto -One way to stave off these morning fights is to adopt a "mutual veto" rule while shopping together in the first place. "It's a great lesson I've learned along the way," Damour says. In a mutual-veto scenario, both you and your teenager are allowed to veto clothing selections. You keep shopping until you find an item that hasn't been vetoed. The good news is that bad clothing choices—unlike say, bad drinking and driving choices—are not likely to harm your teenager.

The first impression you make on people often depends on what you are wearing. While an outrageous outfit might give teenagers a momentary cool feeling, it's the inner beauty that will win the long-term respect of adults and peers. (Italics mine). ■



CHAKALAKA

EXPLORING THE CREATIVITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN DISHES

As a very vital aspect of a person's culture, food does not only represent the diversity of beliefs in the world, rather the various food we eat as we grow up, tend to become a part of who we are. A lot of people tend to associate food from their childhood with warm feelings and good memories and this to a large extent bonds them to their families, holding a special and personal value for them.

A dish is not just sumptuous because of its taste but also the mouth-watering sight it possesses. It is no news that South Africa is known for its admirable rich culture and traditions, as well as its appealing taste which make their dishes ambrosial at every single encounter. **Chakalaka** is a South African dish which fulfills the promise of providing an authentic South African culinary experience. It is a staple that accompanies almost every South African meal and can be combined with a variety of vegetables. As a country so rich with the food culture, South Africa will always be willing to present to its tourists many delicious cuisines to Sample. Many who have tasted this appetizing dish have always complimented its spicy, tingy and flavory taste, which accords it the right to be called a special delicacy.

The Ingredients for this unique dish include:

Oil -- 3 tablespoons

Onions, chopped -- 2

Bell peppers -- 2

Hot chile peppers, minced -- 2 or 3

Garlic, minced -- 2 or 3 cloves

Curry powder -- 2 teaspoons

Tomatoes, chopped -- 3

Baked beans in tomato sauce -- 1 (15-ounce) can

Salt and pepper -- to taste

The preparation of this delectable meal can vary depending on the region and family tradition.

How to Prepare a Mouth-Watering Chakalaka dish:

Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium flame. Add the onions, bell peppers, chile peppers, garlic and curry powder, Saute, stirring frequently, until the onions and peppers are cooked down and wilted, about 4 to 5 minutes.

Stir in the tomatoes and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer open for 15 - 20 minutes on medium heat while stirring occasionally. This will allow the sauce to reduce (Chakalaka should not be runny or watery) and the occasional stirring prevents burning or sticking to the pan.

Stir in the baked beans, salt and pepper and stir to heat through. Serve hot or cold.

This South African Relish Can also be served with bread, pap, samp, curries or stews. To balance the spicy and fiery flavor of the relish, it is sometimes served with amasi (fermented milk).

Being a very unique dish, Chakalaka can be prepared in many variations. The original chakalaka was probably a simple dish of onions, tomatoes and a little curry powder. These days, every South African has his or her own favorite recipe, and many are quite elaborate.

Baked beans are not necessary, but are very common. They also make it a full meal when paired with mealie pap.

Other possible additions include minced fresh ginger (added with the onions), grated carrots, shredded cabbage or chopped cauliflower (added after the tomatoes and simmered until cooked) and chopped cilantro (stirred in at the end).

It's important to remember that each dish has a special place in the culture to which it belongs, and is special to those who prepare it. Food is a portal into culture, and it should be treated as such. The Chakalaka dish continues to stand out as a commendable cuisine of the South African people; showcasing their rich cultural content. ■



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EDUCATING AND EMPOWERING WOMEN
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IMPROVING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION ON CORPORATE BOARDS WOULD REQUIRE QUOTAS IN PUBLICLY TRADED COMPANIES

Trajano Luiza

Working her way through the ranks to become the President of her family retail outlet Magazine Luiza, Luiza Helena Trajano transformed the company from a retail store into one of Brazil's leading retailers, now operating over 731 stores across 16 states in the country. Trajano has in the last decade, retained her place as one of Brazil's leading women entrepreneurs, building and operating a multi-billion – dollar cooperation.

In an interview with **Amazons Watch Magazine**, Trajano Luiza leads us into the world of successful women entrepreneurs and shares with us her watchword in business – **ETHICS**.

Discussing consistency in business:

Having made a mark on business since your youth, what were some of the early lessons learned, which you've earmarked as timely lessons

for young women in business today?

When I reached leadership positions in the network my uncles founded in the late 1980s, the situation was completely different from today, but what always remains is ethics and the need to put people first.

Innovation and Evolving with the times:



Magazine Luiza's expansion in online sales has led to rapid business growth, with revenues reaching 40%. What was the driving force behind this?

I believe it was the understanding that one should not separate the physical from the digital, but integrate the two. Digital is a culture, and we invested a lot in people so that the whole team understood the meaning of it and how it should act in this new reality.

Precisely, with this integration, and transformation of the store as a place of experience, integrated with the digital as support for e-commerce. We must always be alert to new changes.

Improving Women's Access to business financing:

According to the 2014 International Finance Corporation (IFC) report, Women often bear the brunt of poverty and limited access to economic opportunities, due to unfavourable access to financing. As an experienced business leader and successful entrepreneur, what can be done to improve women's access to finance?

I believe this scenario has changed a bit in the last six years. Although access to finance is much more difficult for women, some measures have been taken, but impacted by the economic crisis of this period in the country. We need to promote inventive public policies for female entrepreneurship and facilitate and privilege women's access to funding from public institutions.

Challenges of Women Entrepreneurship:

The 2019 edition of Amazons Watch Magazine and the Center for Economic Development and Leadership's SAMEAWS focuses on Developing Female Transformational Leaders: A New Paradigm for Emerging Growing Economies. We'd crave your indulgence for a preamble. We are looking at Business Case for Gender Lens Investing as one of the top sessions of the summit. As an experienced business leader in South America who has firsthand experience building and running a multi-billion-dollar company, what are those sentiments that derail the efforts of women in the investment circle?

It is the result of a predominant sexist culture and paradigms that established that women should not occupy leadership positions. Breaking this cycle requires quotas in publicly traded companies for women's participation on boards. Quota is a transitory process to reduce inequalities. This is one of the steps, but many policies to encourage female entrepreneurship should be taken, as women are increasingly the decision-making center of the family in any purchase or investment.

Her Action on Violence Against Women:

In 2018, your reaction to the murder of Denise Neves dos Anjos a staff of Magazine Luiza, and her husband led to a well-attended protest. What is the drive that keeps you going?

It was not a protest, but a concrete action to prevent further cases of femicide within Magazine Luiza, with internal reporting channels in cases of violence against women and full assistance to victims. The

program was so successful that we set out to encourage other companies to do the same, going over the formula we adopted. This sharing is being a success, and dozens of companies are making this system of welcoming victims possible.

On Women Development:

The Brazilian Group Mulheres do Brasil (Women of Brazil Group) which you lead, today has over 40,000 women who meet every month to discuss and propose actions related to education, entrepreneurship, social projects and quotas for women. What are the outstanding projects for this group and the successes registered so far?

We have dozens of centers in cities all over Brazil and 17 Brazilian women residing abroad. These are not just monthly meetings, but we work intensively through various nuclei, with concrete actions for transformation in areas such as education, health, public policy, refugees, inclusion, racial equality, entrepreneurship, culture, combating violence against women and many others.

About Inspirational Leadership:


Winning many awards as a South American businesswoman comes with its challenges. How do you cope with these are what are the future projects and milestones? I believe winning a prize increases my responsibility to my country and the causes I advocate. My project for 2020 is to continue mobilizing civil society as much as we can so that together we can find a solution to the various causes we advocate.

Her Philanthropy and Access


Since retirement from active management, you've committed to philanthropic and charity works, tell us about your activities and how our readers can learn more about you?

I continue to work actively for the company, but in parallel I have been increasingly involved.

I can be reached on Instagram @Luizahelenatrajano ■



INCREASING MONETIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTY PRIMARIES IN AFRICA, AN IMPEDIMENT TO WOMEN POLITICAL REPRESENTATION



The impact of the monetization of politics in Africa could be seen as not only gradually derailing efforts to counter corruption on the continent but also tend to close political spaces to a significant number of African women. The raising of consciousness on power inequalities between men and women by feminist advocacy groups has led to the

adoption of gender quotas in aim of achieving and ensuring equal political opportunities for women, representation of women's interests, better democracy and fulfilling some of the contemporary notions or elements of good governance such of equality and fairness. Not only are old democracies adopting these quotas, emerging democracies are gradually





championing this agenda. A considerable number of countries who have not yet institutionalize any form of gender quota systems are exploring ways in which the obstacles to women political participation at all levels could be eliminated.

Seminal contributions have been made by researchers working on issues concerning women political participation. A series of recent studies have established that gender quotas, when implemented under favorable conditions have the potency of breaking up male dominance and monopoly in political offices. In Rwanda, quotas led to gender parity in the legislature, at a critical time in that country's history. It would not be uncommon for one to get surprised at the number of women legislators in the Rwandan parliament, especially with regards to considering a country which had gone through a socially and politically-destabilizing civil war and genocide. Rwanda has been commended for not only the rapid pace through which it had recovered from the genocide, but the significant progress it has made in economic circles and in the advancement of women- friendly policies. Ghana is yet to adopt any

form of gender quota system.

Women comprise 51.2% of Ghana's population according to a 2017 UNDP report. The Fourth Republic of Ghana has seen the rise of women to key positions in all the three arms of government and as an example the head of the judicial arm of government currently being a woman. Nonetheless, their numbers in the entire Ghanaian political decision-making process have not been encouraging. Ghana's parliament has not seen a consistent rise of female parliamentarians. Out of the total of 275 members of Ghana's 7th parliament, it can only boast of only 37 female parliamentarians from both the minority and majority sides. Despite the wave of increased women political participation in Eastern and Southern Africa amid global empowerment campaigns, Ghana's case may be considered leapfrogging as far as women participation is concerned.

The National Democratic Congress (NDC), which is the largest opposition party in Ghana, at the time of writing this piece is lacing its boots to conduct its presidential primaries to elect a flagbearer for the 2020 Elections. The filing

fee for a flagbearer aspirant was initially pegged at GHC400,000 for male aspirants and GHC200,000 for female aspirants but upon consistent pressure from the party elders and the presidential hopefuls themselves, it was then brought down to GHC300,000 and GHC150,000 for male and female aspirants respectively. While the national leaders were the target of consistent backlash for raising the fee in order to favor a particular candidate, the General Secretary of the party debunked such allegations and his justification, stressed the need to raise much-needed funds to successfully conduct the primaries and then to further utilize them to finance the 2020 electioneering campaign. On the face of it, this reason is justifiable but more deeply, it raises the utmost question or concern of how high levels of party nomination fees correlates with the caliber of final candidates we are likely to see during the party primaries.

With regulated corporate election-campaign finance not being a common practice in Africa, there might be the higher likelihood of ordinary politicians with the aspiration of running for the high office of the president, to amass wealth through corrupt practices

in any governmental position they find themselves, in order to have the necessary financial resources should they decide to start embarking on such political aims. To a very high extent, these tendencies tend to derail the efforts to counter corruption which has been a significant obstacle to the socio-economic development of the continent.

With the absence of gender quota systems in the context of Ghanaian politics, the high amounts of parliamentary and presidential filing fees make it even more difficult for under-resourced women to permeate financial barriers to political participation ranging from local and district level elections to parliamentary and presidential elections. As indicated earlier, while this exorbitant fee, as indicated by the NDC's National Executive Council (NEC) are not purposely set to sieve or filter the candidates expected to be seen and voted on at the primaries, it nevertheless might tend to filter the caliber of personality, economic status and gender of aspirants. It has been quite established in research or academic discourse that in the African context, the low and unfavorable levels of financial capacities of women have been a significant factor which derails women political participation, and in cases such factors interacting with unfavorable social and

traditional conditions which cast a demeaning role of the African woman relative to a man as far as political leadership is concerned; and with these conditions which had not been completely eliminated, it is incumbent on political gatekeepers to take steps which do not compound the already identified impediments to women political participation.

In a similar case with Nigeria's preparation towards the 2019 presidential elections, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC) which are the two main political parties asked election hopefuls to pay huge fees for them to stand the chance of competing in the general election on the ticket of the parties. The parties' decisions drew wide criticisms from the people arguing that the move tend to favor the well-connected and financially-endowed citizens. A 2018 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) report published by Transparency International (TI), a global corruption watchdog ranked Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation as among the most corrupt countries in Africa. According to the report, Nigeria which scored 27 ranked 148 of the 180 countries evaluated in 2017, which meant that it was better off than only 32 out of the 180 countries assessed.

In a country reeling in corruption, there is the moral burden on political parties to eliminate

practices which tend to exacerbate the problem, and upon which making political processes more affordable is critical. Women make up about 49 per cent of the Nigerian population and data shows nearly one out of four women in sub-Saharan Africa is a Nigerian. While this presents potential human resources that can be harnessed to enhance economic productivity; the disparities in social and economic opportunities between men and women have never been starker. Nigeria has the lowest number of female parliamentarians in sub-Saharan Africa and ranks 133rd in the world for female political representation. It is thereby non-negotiable to increase efforts to monetize African politics in order to make filing for political nominations and contests more affordable to African women who have historically been faced with structural problems inhibiting their political participation.

In the African drive to ensure political participation of women, the least phenomenon that should be encouraged is the rising cost to political offices and candidacy and the earlier we discourage it, the better it augments our efforts to lessen corruption in politics and to open up political spaces to all people, especially women, regardless socio-economic standing ■



THE MASTERPIECE OF THE WOMAN- COLUMNIST

Pakistani-Canadian journalist Habiba Nosheen is a successful woman of color representing other women of color in the United States.

She was born in Pakistan by her Arab parents in 1982, and spent the early years of her life in Lahore. Her family migrated to Canada when Habiba was nine years old. The family became refugees on their arrival in Canada, but things fell into place after they gained right to residency.

Growing up in Toronto, Canada Habiba obtained a bachelor's degree from University of Toronto and master's degree from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism as well as from York University, Toronto in Women's Studies.

Habiba articulates four different languages fluently □ English, Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi. She started her career in journalism as a reporter at the CBC Radio Pakistan where she was later nominated to report for the prestigious Kroc Fellowship, on-air for NPR's Morning Edition and All Things Considered.





In 2012, she started her PBS investigation, “To Adopt a Child,” which told the story of the murky side of adoptions from Nepal that left many families caught in the middle. The investigation won the Gracie Award for Outstanding Correspondent and led to a resolution in the Nepalese adoption system, after the government accepted faults for the first time that the whole system has a mistake.

In 2013, she successfully shot the film *Outlawed in Pakistan*, she was totally responsible for directing, reporting and narrating of the film which was aired on PBS Frontline. The film was won the Emmy for Outstanding Research and Nosheen’s third Overseas Press Club Award.

Outlawed in Pakistan also premiered at the Sundance Film Festival where it was called “among the standouts” of Sundance by The Los Angeles Times. The film also got her the David A. Andelman and Pamela Title Award by The Overseas Press Club which honors “the best international reporting in the broadcast media showing a

concern for the human condition.”

Another outstanding piece that brought her many ground breaking awards was her work for *This American Life*, a radio documentary “What Happened at Dos Erres?”. The piece put together a massacre in Guatemala that happened 30 years earlier partly by tracking down the men responsible for the killings and interviewing them about what happened that day.

The documentary was tagged “a masterpiece of storytelling” by New Yorker and it won her various awards including; The George Foster Peabody Award, The Dart Award for Excellence in Coverage of Trauma, The Third Coast Radio Award, The New York Radio Festival Award and two Overseas Press Club Awards in addition to being a finalist for The Livingston Award for Young Journalists.

In 2014, Habiba joined 60 Minutes and she was nominated for the Emmy Award and named a finalist for the George Foster Peabody Award.

Pakistan’s leading newspaper named Habiba Nosheen as one of the “top 5 Outstanding Pakistani Women” in 2014.

Her documentaries have received various supports from The Fund for Investigative Journalism, The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, The Nation Institute’s Investigative Fund and ITVS.

Her reporting has also been published by The New York Times, TIME, The Washington Post, BBC and ProPublica among others outlets.

Two years ago she was announced by CBC as the new co-host of Canada’s leading investigative news-magazine show, “the fifth estate.” She has since been offering viewers deep and enticing stories, of ongoing events, on the fifth estate’s 42nd season premieres.

She also currently teaches journalism at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism.

Habiba is a happy mother of two lovely children. ■

Sheikha Hind bint Abdul Aziz Al Qasimi

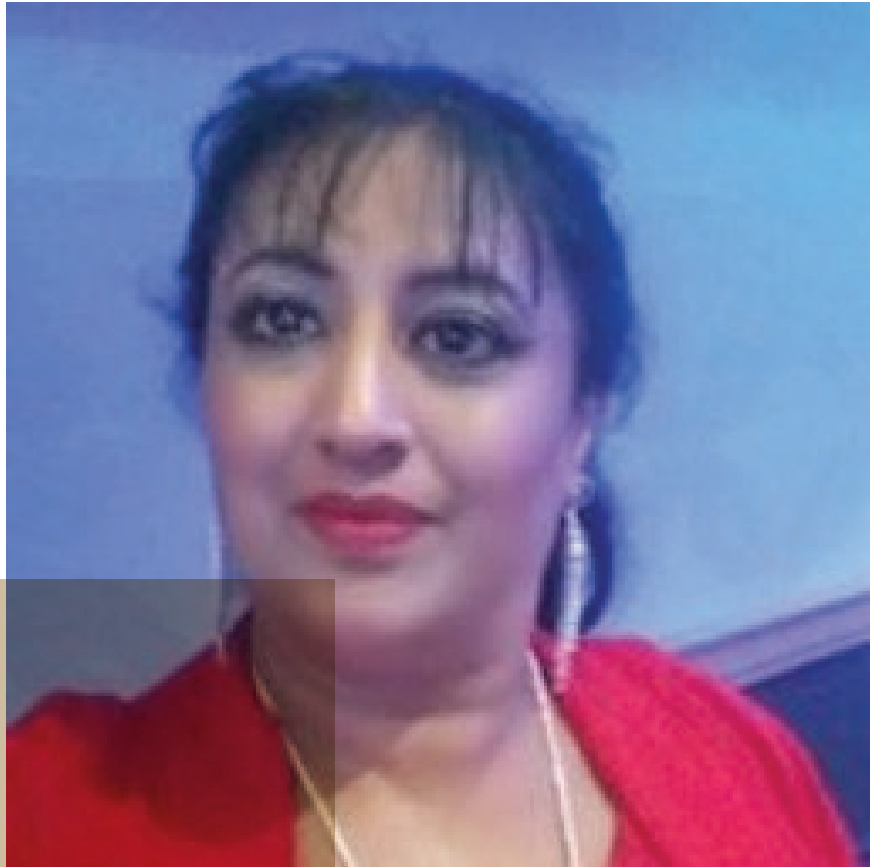
A PROFILE IN LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE



Her Excellency, Sheikha Hind bint Abdul Aziz Al Qasimi is the President of Emirates International Business Club (IAB). She obtained a PhD in Sociology in 1996 from Ain Shams University, Masters in Sociology in 1993 from Ain Shams University, Bachelor Degree in 1980 from the Faculty of Arts - University of Kuwait. She is an Educational expert for planning, development and institutional evaluation in the UAE Ministry of Education; Member of the German-UAE Council for Trade and Industry; Member of the Emirates-Swiss Friendship Council; Expert of the Council of Economic Unity in the League of Arab States, and Member of the Board of Trustees - Arab Women's Council. She is also the Chairman of the UAE Businesswomen Council for

two periods from 2008 to 2014; Goodwill Ambassador for the Scientific and Human Development Program since 2009; Founding Member and President of the Business Professional World Emirates Club in 2014.

HE Sheikha Hind bint Abdul Aziz Al Qasimi received the Honorary Doctorate in Voluntary Youth Leaders and Pioneering Charitable Projects - International College in London, American Institute for the Development of Education and Al-Tarek Center for Rehabilitation and Autism in the United Arab Emirates 2015. She has also been recognized globally for her work, including: the title of the World Lady to support businesswomen, economic and social development in the Arab world - Al Waleed Business Award 2015, among many others. ■



Rooksana Modan

A model of Entrepreneurial Excellence

Rooksana Modan is an Entrepreneur, Transformation Mindset Coach, Executive Business Coach, International Speaker, Empowerment Speaker, MC, Master NLP Coach, Coaching4Kidz Coach, as well as a Business Broker. You can call her the mistress of all trades. However, unlike the popular saying where the jack of all trades is a master of none, Modan has mastered all her trades and does them exceptionally well.

With a passion and purpose to make a difference in the lives of those she meets, Modan is involved in various community projects to empower women and youths.

In this interview with Amazons Watch Magazine, she tells a bit about her growing up experiences and her present life. Excerpts:

Can you please share some of your growing up experiences with our readers?

I am born in Lenasia, the 2nd born daughter; I have 3 sisters, no brothers. My parents were poor and both worked providing for my sisters and me with a loving home. My late mum instilled in me the values of uplifting others, being strong and courageous, always be humble yet be firm in my values and believes, my late dad instilled in me the values of your mindset brings about success, work smart not hard, don't live your life comparing yourself to others, pave your own pathway to your success in life.

My parents didn't have the money to send me to further my studies, so I got a job to fund my studies pursuing an executive secre-

tarial course in 1989. I have always been keen on upgrading my skills.

Kindly take us through your career journey as a serial entrepreneur.

I started working at Lenasia Traders & Association as an Administrator at the tender age of 17. I went on to work as a receptionist at Liberty Life, then a Personal Assistant. I worked at the Automobile Association of SA as a Sales Leader, MNet/Multichoice as a Branding Strategist, Anglovaal Minerals Mining House as an HR Bursary Officer moving into Training and Developing Staff. At the age of 27 I opened my first business Apex Supermarket, at the age of 30 I purchased my first BP Fuel station. Purchasing a site that was earmarked for closure was a brave step, being a mom of a Twelve year old and 1 year old at the time, was very challenging. We doubled the liter age in the first 3 months and in 6 months later we opened a store on site. I purchased my second site 10 years later. I continued being a consultant Business Optimizer maximizing profits and reducing losses, on wet and dry stock on fuel stations. While managing my site I participated in a project called Kigima whereby I trained and multiskilled Managers, Supervisors, Cashiers, Merchandisers, Pump attendants.

I was the director of Global Woman SA from January 2018 till October 2019.

I was the Franchisee of Renwick Elite Business Brokers from October 2015 till November 2019

I am the Director of Apex Development from October 2015 to date. We train on soft skills and leadership training as well as Business Optimization

I am the Director of Success Growth Coaching, Executive Business Mindset Coaching, growing you successfully

I have recently purchased 50% share in Advanced Shield Tech, Defending your home, business and commercial property, we specialize in panic rooms and spyware.

We understand that you are involved in various community projects to up skill and empower women and youth. Please tell us more about this?

I was the Mindset coach to 40 teenagers who built a 4 seater Cessna plane. The mindset training that they received throughout the 4 weeks of the build, was leadership training, working as a team, delegating effectively, communicating with purpose, overcoming obstacles, being a solution finder,

I am the Mindset Coach for the past 2 years, to 50 Miss Gauteng Finalists, this is pageant based on humanitarian and empowerment of our youth, women, orphanages, elderly care, and woman shelters.

The skills they learn is how to brand themselves effectively, leadership through love, the essence of a woman, how to value you and your beliefs, how to be financially savvy, how to start a business and how to grow a business, how to brand with integrity,

I have been part of a many youth and woman empowerment workshops to empower enable and uplift our youth and woman taking them off the streets, rehabilitating them from drug abuse and training them with soft skills to seek employment

I belong to a group of ladies who feed orphans and refurbish shelters and orphan homes to give them a better life to our orphans and the elderly

I do workshops Success Teen Workshops, showing our youth how to study with better results, how to be respectful and give back to their parents and communities, training our youth on leadership through life and how to make wise choices in their careers and business choices.

Young African leaders believe that improving access to mentorship and incubators will help them become successful. As a successful entrepreneur, what is your take on this and what are some of the essential ways you provide mentorship for the youths of Africa, particularly young African women?

I believe with the right training and leadership skills our youth and particularly young African women can eradicate the high unemployment rate. Being mentored and coached, allows the candidate to be held accountable to make the right choices and decisions to make a difference in their lives and those that they come in contact with.

I believe with the right training and leadership skills our youth and particularly young African women can eradicate the high unemployment rate.

Having a good support structure is vital for a person to develop a strong character and good moral values. The programs we do are based on a six months others are for a year. This way they have knowledgeable people who can guide them and growth and develop their mindset and entrepreneurial skills. Having a coach guide you through your process of opening your business, finding your unique selling proposition, who your ideal client is, where will you be focusing your business and efforts on what will be your core business and when will you launch your products is vital. 80% of businesses fail because of lack of guidance and being held accountable with time lines to succeed. With the right coach who is passionate and dedicated in empowering, focusing on starting growing and multi streaming income any entrepreneur will be able to be successful. More training companies are offering incubator programs which are vital to sustaining the longevity of a business.

One of the challenges most women in pursuit of successful career are faced with is the essential and pivotal task of balancing family and professional life. kindly tell us how you balance your family and work life. Has your pursuit of success in your professional life in anyway affected your family life?

The challenges I have faced as a woman in a predominately male environment is that I had to continuously strive to prove my worth and my abilities as an entrepreneur. I had to learn through trial and error to balance my family and businesses, my sons were young so it was vital that I help them with their schooling as well as have quality time to instill in them good values and life skills. My partner unfortunately could not deal with my success and chose to belittle me, verbally abuse me and criticize my abilities and strengths. Unfortunately our marriage ended after 24 years, as I gave up on trying to continuously proving that I was a good loving wife, be more subservient, trying adept to his carefree way of choices. The choice of ending my marriage was a difficult one, however it has been the best decision I could have made. As a woman my greatest lessons I had to learn was to accept and love me first, to acknowledge my strengths and embrace my uniqueness, my support of having amazing strong woman in my life who continually supported me and cared for me and uplifted me is a blessing. I am grateful for the strong courageous men who I have encountered in my life, who did not feel intimidated by my success and mindset. I live by the motto of doing what I love,

which is empowering, training, startups, growths, knowledge, and positive mindsets, and loving every moment of what I do allows me to overcome the challenges I face of being a single female parent. I am the proud mum of two sons, Yusuf 27 a Physical Science teacher, and Aarif 19 who has completed his schooling, moving into the space of Business Studies. I always make time for my family and live with the principles of living a balanced life. I set aside two days per week for my sons which is our time to connect either we go out on a nature expedition or we go to watch a movie or have dinner together. I lost both my parents at a young age. My sisters and I visit each other regularly, and we enjoy getting pampered and spoilt, we enjoy cooking together and basically just being in each other's company.

What's the best way for the readers of Amazons Watch Magazine to connect with you (You can include links to your social networks and websites)?

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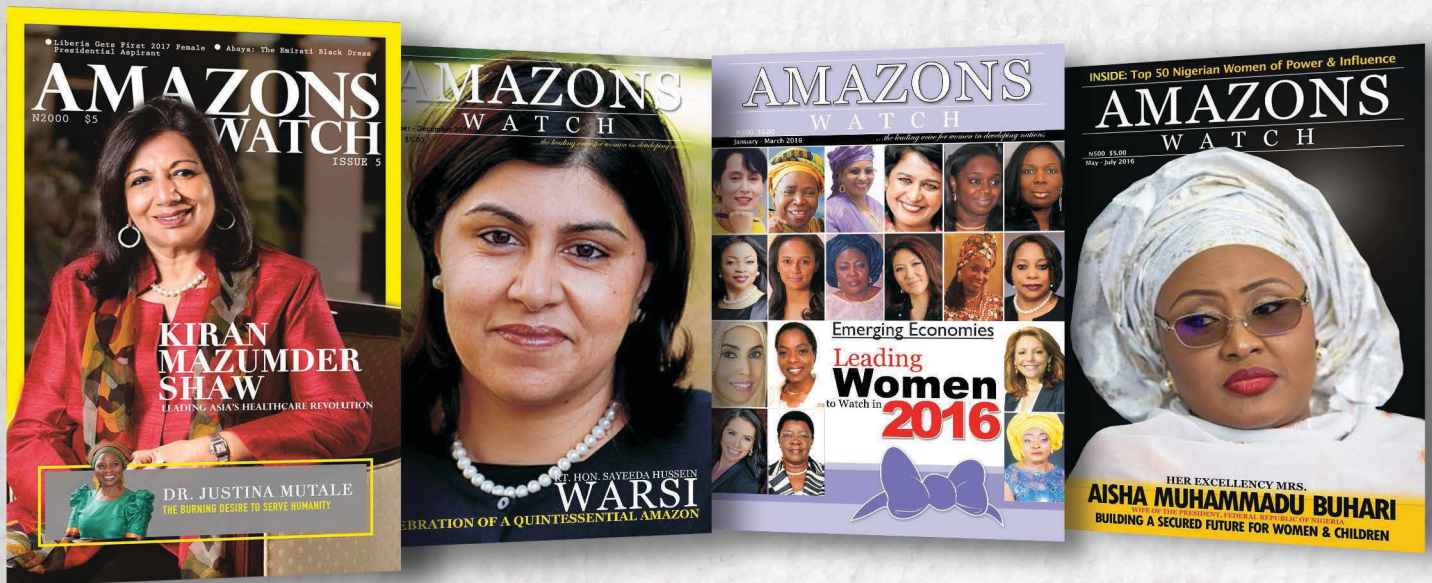
LinkedInn : Rooksana Modan ■



Rooksana Modan taking Global Woman in South Africa

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THE ONLY WOMAN IN THE BOARDROOM

THE STORY OF REINETTE VAN DER MERWE



Women will be the minority in almost all if a random survey of board rooms is taken and in situations where you are in the minority, growing your influence and power takes time. With over two decades in the banking industry, Reinnette Van Der Merwe earned the title of being the only woman in the boardroom and she was the only woman “most times”. In this interview with Amazons watch magazine, she shares her thoughts on this and other issues. Excerpts;

As an impact investor with a longstanding history of value-driven investing you have been reputed to place corporate social responsibility first. With gender equality a mainstay of the sustainable development goals and fewer women in the corporate circle, can CSR contribute much in the area of intellectual and financial empowerment of women and how does prioritizing CSR solve this age-long problem?

In many communities around the globe, women are still not on an equal footing with men. Through CSR (Citizenship) initiatives, it is possible to reach and assist these women to become entrepreneurs or enter the world of work. Many programmes support women to become financially independent and grow their businesses. The Barclays ‘Ready to Work’ initiative provides the youth with an opportunity to learn about the expectations of the work environment and build skills that will support them in the workplace. Working professionals donate their time and share their experiences. Sometimes all young people need is someone to look up to as a role model and moral support. I have mentored many young women in my career – providing them with guidance and inspiration. Citizenship initiatives are good vehicles to reach women and share advice and knowledge.

One of our many excellent community programmes in Botswana is called **Madi Majwana – Stories from your pocket**. It is a radio drama that was created through a partnership with Maitisong Theatre. Our main objective with Madi Majwana is to continue to provide Botswana with financial literacy education but to do it in a fun and memorable way. In addition to the radio drama, the

cast and crew of Madi Majwana have embarked on an annual tour to an average of 17 villages to perform the drama for communities and our colleagues. The performing arts provided an innovative and exciting platform through which we can continue to talk to Botswana about money skills and encourage them to share their stories – good and bad – on their relationship with money.

Over 500 000 individuals listen to the radio drama annually, over 7 000 have attended the performance and over 300 youth have had an opportunity to work with Maitisong and develop skills in the performing arts and money management.

Another example is Grass Roots Growing Our Wealth (GROW.) Through this innovative development model, which was developed and implemented by Project Concern International (PCI), Barclays was offered a great opportunity to impact the lives of women by teaching them about financial security and how to become active members of their communities. The GROW model teaches disadvantaged individuals to form self-governing groups that save, lend and conduct business together. During the term of the partnership with PCI, over 300 000 pula was mobilized in savings and a total of 119 groups were formed.

At Absa, we also recently partnered with the Public Benefit Organisation Lionesses of Africa. Our aim is to give women entrepreneurs a platform to share their knowledge and experience and to enable them to unlock even more business opportunities.

During your tenure, Barclays Bank Botswana met many milestones validating the call for women to be recognised for top management positions. Aside from the economic metrics, what was the level of gender inclusion during your stay and was this a concern before you took over?

Botswana has done better than many other countries in utilising the skills women bring to the business world. I never really noticed gender inequality during my career until I attended the International Women’s Forum fellowship programme. The programme highlighted that men help each other up the corporate ladder, Women on the other hand, compete with each other. The

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programme made me aware of these challenges and I became more deliberate in my appointment of women and in supporting them to develop their full potential. My successor in Botswana is one such example – I have promoted her from Head of IT to my Chief Operations Officer and supported her appointment to the Chief Executive Officer role.

With over twenty years' experience in the banking sector, you have risen through the glaring gender imbalance to become one of the most formidable banking professionals in the South African region, often referred to as "the only woman in the boardroom"; please share with us some of your experiences in breaking through these diverse barriers and what steps can be taken to tear down gender barriers in the continent.

I have said many times when asked this question that I don't see gender I see competence. I never noticed gender in the boardroom until it was pointed out to me. I believe one of the ways to break down the barriers is for women to start by promoting and including women when making appointments. I have found that men at times are uncomfortable having women in the boardroom but once they realise you are competent they settle down and become supportive and inclusive. Women should educate themselves, support each other and

move into leadership positions with confidence.

Far more than the first-world countries, Botswana is revered globally as one of the standout countries with an impressive gender equality posting, with recorded economic and social growth ascribed to this. What are the lessons to learn from this and how can other countries adopt this without having to compromise on the quality of leadership?

Women in Botswana have taken on leadership roles with more confidence that many of their counterparts in other countries. They have had impressive role models such as Linah Mohohlo who was the Governor of the Central Bank for around 17 years. Many of the financial services organisations are led by strong women. Botswana has embraced and supported their female leaders. Some of the lessons learned are that women should take these roles on with confidence and should be supported to be successful just like their male counterparts.

The 2019 edition of the *Amazons Watch Magazine* and *Centre for Economic and Leadership Development's SAMEAWS* is themed *Developing Female Transformational Leaders: A New Paradigm for Growing Emerging Economies*. We'd crave your indulgence for a preamble. We are looking at the *Business Case for Gender Lens Investing*, as one of the key sessions of the summit. As a panelist in this session and one who has had the apex-level experience in the investment world, what are those sentiments that derail the efforts of women in the investment circle?

Transformational leadership means leaders need to encourage inspire and motivate employees to be innovative. Leaders create change that will help grow and shape the future success of the company. Women should educate themselves and ensure that they are part of the conversation as equals to men. Women are their own worst enemies, taking a back seat at times. They don't believe in themselves and their counterparts do not support them the same way men will support each other. Some women also try to be like the men which then also create disparity. Women should be proud to be women and be authentic in their leadership approach.

The CELD's Global Impact Leadership Award recognizes women who have led a sector with remarkable achievements that have improved the lives of women in that sector. Quite particularly your initiative the "Ready to Work" has had testimonials to its effectiveness. We believe that this initiative was designed to close a gap. We'd like to know areas of improvement on its already existing structure and the efforts to achieve this.

'Ready to Work' is an excellent example of a Barclays initiative that hits the mark. Our 'Ready to Work' initiative was launched in 2016 with the main objective of providing digital and face-to-face training curricula for young people in an effort to ease their transition from school to the world of work, whether it's entrepreneurship or employment. 'Ready to Work' has four modules including work, people, money and entrepreneurial skills. Through our partnerships in Botswana with Project Concern International and Stepping Stones International we have trained approximately 9 000 young people across Botswana and placed 213 into employment or internship opportunities. Our training programme will continue this year and I am confident that we would have reached over 10 000 by the end of the year. In addition to developing skills in the four areas mentioned, Ready to Work has also given young people who have dropped out of school the confidence to return back to school and complete their studies.

I think more financial investment and partnering with more community partners can improve the programme. We have already made training programmes available on our website where people can download the material free of charge. More funding can also open the door for paid tutors to support learners on their journey. Currently all training and tutoring is done on a voluntary basis or via our community partners.

What is the best way for readers of *Amazons Watch Magazine* to connect with you?

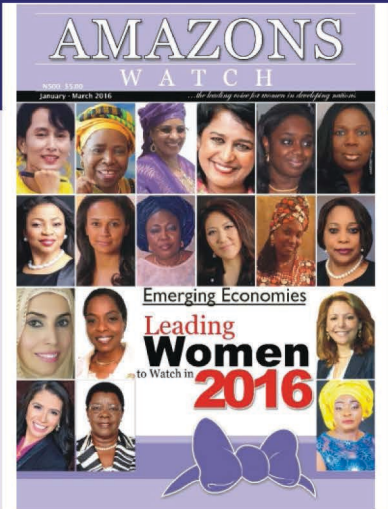
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DIVERSIFYING LEADERSHIP

By Hawa Charfaray

I've always been in the training and development sector in the IT, Leadership; Human Resources and Business sectors. In today's times, Training & Development has many challenges due to economic strains, however, as a Women Leader, we have to learn to be flexible in our business approaches. Thus, be open to new markets, new ideas and INNOVATION. When I first was approached to lead a team of experts in the Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear Training sector, my immediate first human reaction was of fear and lack of confidence. And then you hear your inner voice as a Leadership coach... you know that voice that you use when you coach and mentor others with.... ***"that your skills as a leader are what's important and not the subject matter"*** the one sure thing as a leader is to remember that you will always have the specialists and expertise in your TEAM. If you don't, you can always outsource it. I have learned through my Leadership career, that "you can either make bread or burn bread with the same fire" which means utilise your skills of Leadership in every field and aspect instead of limiting it to only one area of expertise.

Leadership is all about developing your people and leading and allowing THE AUTHENTIC team to surface. As leaders, we don't realise the importance of leading and NOT managing. Your skills in creating a strategy and action plan for your team will become the vision of all the experts in your organisation. It allows them to focus on the important jobs they studied for with your support and Leadership as direction. Working WITH them will allow the team to grow stronger.

As the CEO and Founder of Train-



ing Excellence South Africa and Orbrix - UAE with more than 20 years of experience in leadership, **I have realised that the very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision. "It's got to be a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion."** - just as Theodore Hesburgh, President of the University of Notre Dame says.

A year ago, my vision needed adjusting and changing direction due to economic changes in the training Industry in Africa, thus I started collaborating with partnerships in the UAE. Not too long thereafter I was appointed CEO of Orbrix, Dubai.

ORBRIX is a firm dedicated to providing training and consulting services in the radiological and environmental protection industry. Our mission is to ensure that the latest innovations and best practices for radiation, oil and gas, and biological protection are implemented by every organization to ensure the safety and security of the community and future generations.

As a women leader in this dynamic field of **Radiation Protection and CBRN (Chemical and Biological Radiation Nuclear)**, I have invested in changing lives through my many years of experience as a Global Speaker, Trainer, Corporate Wellness Practitioner,

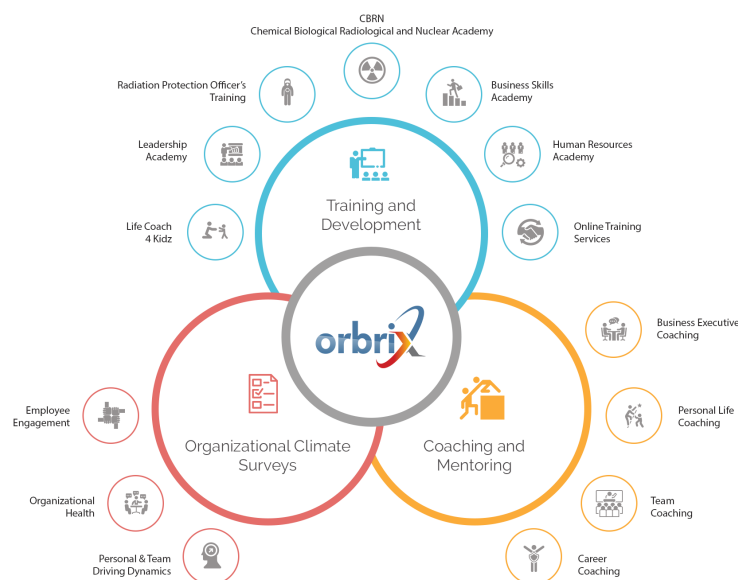
Business Executive Coach, an NLP practitioner, Life Coach, Language and Behaviour (LAB) Profile Practitioner, Inventory, Work Attitude and Motivation (iWAM) Practitioner, Ecometric practitioner, Hypnotherapy Practitioner and Timeline Practitioner. I believe that **“We cannot become ourselves by ourselves. We need to go out of our way to support each other. We need to be mirrored, emulated and celebrated, as who you are truly does make a difference – Become Consciously Purposeful in Your Life as a leader!”** I also believe that **“There’s nothing more demoralizing than a leader who can’t clearly articulate why we’re doing what we’re doing.”** As said by James Kouzes and Barry Posner.

ORBRIX UAE and Training Excellence South Africa as Internationally woman-driven organisations have often been requested to

workplace. Therefore, the notion of “one size fits all” women development initiatives is outrageous. What needs to change or be fixed is the whole approach to women’s development initiatives.

At Orbrix and Training Excellence we believe, that we must work with organizations to remove barriers for women’s advancement. We must equally work within ourselves as women leaders to become aware of and remove the glass ceilings and Sticky Floors syndromes in our own heads first - habits and mindsets that lead to self-sabotage, and make it exhausting for so many of us to move our careers forward. Each Woman have their own Beliefs and **Self-Sabotages** which either determines their limits (Glass Ceiling) or **Stuck** states (Sticky floor) Syndromes.

Two important common areas that’s holding Women back which our teaching highlight



work with women, provide women’s workshops and training. I personally have been invited to speak at women’s networks and conferences. As enjoyable as these events are, I personally started growing uncomfortable with a subtle suggestion that permeated many of these gatherings.... The idea that women have similar deficits that hold them back from advancing in senior ranks.

It is indisputable that men and women have very different experiences in the workplace due to a variety of factors, and furthermore, just like the men counterparts, not every woman has the same experiences and challenges in the

Collaboration VS. Competition

Many Women don’t know that Collaboration is the New Competition.

Women most likely to collaborate will be high in risk-taking, high in authority, high in teamwork, high in result-orientation and possibly high in creativity and variety.

Women most likely to compete instead will be low in these areas but high in autonomy and high in status. As there is no right or wrong based on ones Driving Dynamics, competing will not get one into Senior positions, collaborating with our male counterparts and other Women would be the better option.

As problems are becoming more and more interconnected and complex, leaders and organizations are recognising these modern-day challenges and thus are putting aside their self-interests and are rather collaborating to advance their shared and collective objectives.

Building Networks Rather than Leveraging off Networks

Women are too busy joining networking women groups. We should be investing our time in Gender Co-existent networks and leveraging off both male and female networks. Women generally are high on Relationship Reliance; The key here is that they are sometimes more RELIANT on relationships instead of LEVERAGING off the relationships. There is a huge difference. One is dependant and the other is independent. Leveraging off a relationship is more beneficial to each party as they each gain a win-win situation from the relationship. After a network and meetup, spend time on how one can **leverage** off that meeting and then **act immediately** on it. Just knowing a prominent leader and taking some pictures with them is not going to make the business work. As women, we should use our strength of Building Personal Relationships to convert that into Transactional Relationships.

Not just as women leaders, BUT rather as LEADERS holistically, we should harness all our strengths and Lead with a mindset that is truly from within us. Having had the opportunity to look at the data and coach women based on Executive Presence and Reality Check Assessments; it’s helped us appreciate that the only effective way to help them advance is to treat women as individuals. Frankly, we think that it’s time for an overhaul of women’s leadership development. If the one-size-fits-all thinking doesn’t change, the interventions won’t change, and there will be disappointments all around.

Peter Drucker says, “You cannot manage what you have not measured”. For a consult on your Driving Dynamics Constructs and determining how your limiting beliefs and the sticky floor holds you back from achieving and rising to Executive Presence, Training Excellence can assist you in solving these critical factors. ■

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LET THE ALARM GO OFF A STRANGER IS AROUND

By Elope-Young Splendor

For one moment, turn on the eyes of your imagination and picture the height of fear that fills the heart of a four-year-old kid when she becomes fully aware of the consequences that might befall her, peradventure she falls into the hands of wrong people and strangers who gallivant with the mission to harm young children.

It is a true saying that; the 21st-

century parent needs to raise kids who are well-informed about the happenings in their environment as well as security-conscious kids who have acclimatized themselves with the current security needs around their environment. Since there are no “spelled-out” descriptions of the physical appearance of bad or unsafe strangers and no foolproof methods in ascertaining suspicious intentions of people

we are just meeting for the first time, hence it becomes paramount that parents teach children not to judge strangers by their physical appearances, rather kids are to be trained properly to trust their instincts and always never give in to any pressure from strangers to keep calm when they already feel uncomfortable with that stranger.

This is why wise parents must find

ways to guard their kids against strangers and any form of harm. Educating your kids about stranger danger is highly necessary; on the other hand, a wise parent must be able to balance between taking precautions and avoiding being over-protective. Most parents have mastered the art of beginning their so-called “security alert” lectures with the cliché ‘do not talk to strangers’; of course, this is not a wrong counsel but if not appropriately interpreted, it might be harmful. It would be impossible to identify all ‘bad’ and ‘good’ strangers and this can to some extent hamper the social life of a child. Since most parents might be determined to have a nice stranger-danger education for their kids, this must not be overly done to create a life of fear and panic in the children.

There are specific methods that have been checked good as highly impactful ways to teach kids about strangers as well as guide them on how to protect themselves against suspicious people. Chua, a child counselor suggests that when a young child gets missing she can be taught to approach certain types of adults for help, such as police personnel, security officers, and a parent who is with their children.

Also, parenting experts suggest that to raise security-conscious children, you should teach kids how to react to suspicious behaviour by being firm in saying ‘no’; by approaching police, security officers, other parents or caregivers for assistance. Their ability to promptly describe the unsafe situation they are in or attract the attention of others by shouting “Help!” or running away from the suspicious stranger, in cases where they can; would also save the day.

Furthermore, Parents should teach their children to apply secret safety codes. Considering the presence of numerous predators who consistently lookout for vulnerable kids who they can inflict their evil schemes on, parents are advised to teach their children secret safety codes which could be a word or number, signaling safe and unsafe situations. Safety codes include inculcating in older children the habit of memorizing either their parents’ phone numbers or vital emergency contact details which will go a long way to ensure your kids are always security conscious



as well as constantly armed for impending danger.

It is also of essence that parents nowadays realize that what they say to their children about strangers matter. There is age appropriateness to teaching kids how to identify when a stranger is around. For instance, preschoolers do not know what a stranger is and would be unable to identify who is safe and who is not. Educating your kids about strangers and how they should be related to gives that child a mindset of being security conscious wherever they find themselves. The honest and most times painful truth you will not always be with your little girl but even at a young age; there are easy ways to teach her how to look out for herself.

A great way to teach your kids about her safety and her relationship with strangers is ensuring you show her a list of few examples of adults the kids can trust or even go to for help. In doing this, you could also teach her to identify authority figures, like security guards, the police and other safe places and people, so your child can identify safe people

she can spend her life with.

In addition to this, it also wise to prepare older children to stay home alone. Teach her not to just open the door when someone comes to the door, but should say, “Mom can’t come to the door right now.” Perhaps if the visitor has a package, he requests them to leave it at the door or to come back another time. In other cases where a landline is available, decide whether you want your child to answer the phone or not. Although, an 8-year-old may be mature enough, depending on her level of reasoning since some 8-year-olds might still act childish and negligent of the happenings around. If you plan to call home frequently when you’re away, use caller ID so he will be sure about who is calling.

Raising a responsible child begins from the toddler age, through teenage-hood into adulthood so no age is too early to educate them on this subject matter. This is one vital mindset every parent must have while educating a child on stranger danger, notwithstanding, when educating the child, you must be mindful to use the various terminologies suitable for her age.



For parents who wish to begin this journey of educating their kids on stranger danger, they must be conscious of using words and sentences appropriately so that this does not go a long way to inflict fear on these tender minds. It is fortunate enough that you do not need to frighten your child to keep her safe. A preschooler is not entitled to know the graphic and scary details that make you want to protect her against strangers, of course, your nightmares need not and indeed should not become her nightmares, bearing in mind that frightening your child is not a guarantee that they will be safe and it is never the aim for teaching danger-safety rules.

Parents and guardians have been saddled with the huge responsibility of ensuring that the kids are provided for as well as protected from any form of harm. Neglecting this crucial responsibility simply means giving room to predators such as kidnappers, child traffickers and so on to pry on your child. Hence, the reason parenting security tips should not be ignored by any serious parent. Your kids need to be equipped daily with the right information to make decisions especially in cases of emergency when you are not with them. Do

not forget that raising street smart kids who can react to what's going on around them will improve their chances of staying safe and making the right choices in life.

A popular saying by a scholar, Alan Lakein goes that "planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it". To avoid future panic which results from having a child trapped in the dangerous hands of predators such as kidnappers, armed robbers or even child-traffickers who specialize in endangering the lives of children; you must not be ignorant of these predators. You will need to educate your children on vital stranger danger rules.

The menace, insecurity, in the world today has become an unending tale on the lips of many as it has not exempted the innocent and under-aged population from being prey to its havoc. Therefore, mothers must be vigilant, as well as intentional about guiding their kids on the current security issues. In the same vein, there is a clarion call to parents, to spell out the relationships of family members and friends to their children; letting them know who relatives are as well as who strangers are. ■

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A GOOD LEISURE THE PERFECT ANTIDOTE TO POOR MENTAL HEALTH

Culled from Leisure Things

A wise saying by Glenn Close states that “what mental health needs is more sunlight, more candor, and more unashamed conversation.” In these recent times, it has become more rampant than before to see people walk around the streets lost in deep thoughts and at the verge of attempting suicide, then simply because it is quite difficult to ascertain the thoughts on a man’s mind, until it is voiced, the news of suicidal death has become the trend these days.

Even though there are a handful of reasons why folks commit suicide, one of the grand causes of suicide is likely to be a state of poor mental health. Research by the Public Health Agency of Canada (2006) found that approximately 12% of Canadians experience depression, 4.8% experience a major depressive episode, and rates of depression are higher among women than men (at a ratio of 2:1). In addition, 50% of those who experience a

major depression will experience a second bout at some point in their lives.

To begin, leisure can be helpful in diagnosing depression. Among other things, the loss of interest or pleasure in usually enjoyed leisure activities is one of the symptoms of depression. Withdrawing from family and friends is another. These changes in enjoyment of leisure or avoidance of leisure can be indicators of depression. If you notice your own loss of interest in pleasurable activities or notice family members avoiding family events or invitations to spend time with friends or not participating in activities that normally were loved and enjoyed, these would be changes to monitor.

Leisure may also help to protect individuals from experiencing depression or the degree to which the symptoms are experienced (called buffering). And as research has shown, for many, leisure is used as a way to cope with

the depression they experience (Fullagar, 2012; Nimrod, Kleiber, & Berdychevsk, 2012).

Protecting Your Leisure, Protecting Your Mental Health

Leisure can protect individuals from, or act as a buffer to the stresses they experience and the potential negative impacts those stresses can have on people’s health and well-being. Iso-Ahola and Coleman (1993) argued that: 1) the social nature of leisure participation and the opportunities for friendship and support; and 2) the opportunity for control and feelings of competence (self-determination) that are associated with leisure activities can both help with protecting against stress. Those who are able to tap into personal and social resources available through leisure activities may protect from depression or contribute to a depressive episode being less serious.

There is considerable research





pointing to the benefits of physical activity and depression in preventing and managing depression (Daley, 2008). Other activities like playing cards, watching television, and meditation can also help distract or give the mind a break from negative thoughts (Folkman, 2008).

Understanding the benefits that leisure can provide and the specific types of leisure activities that could be particularly helpful in certain situations (e.g., physical activity for preventing depression) is an important step in using leisure as a resource to protect your mental health – protect you from depression or a major depressive episode. If, however, there is a lack of time available for leisure in one's life, it is difficult to use it as a resource. Therefore, protecting your leisure time or making it a priority by carving out leisure time is as important as understanding the benefits available.

One of the hard lessons I've learned in my working life is that my workplace is not going to protect my mental health. Don't get me wrong, I work with good people and I have health benefits, but similar to many other Canadians in other work environments, I have experienced increases in my workload and a reduction in resources to do my job. The result is often longer hours, more stressful conditions under which to complete the extra work, and less personal leisure time available. As workload increases, there are concerns expressed about

people getting burned out (i.e., tired, exhausted, losing motivation) or having to sacrifice productivity in one area to complete extra work in another.

There never seems to be any discussion specifically about the impact on people's leisure or their mental health (two things I see as closely connected). I've learned that it is up to me to say "no" and "I've done my part" and "I'm doing my share" and set realistic, achievable work-related goals so that my work life doesn't completely take over the time I have available for leisure.

There may be those who have stressful family circumstances. Setting boundaries with others (e.g., family and friends), while perhaps more difficult than setting boundaries at work, may also be important especially if your care for others leaves you with little time or energy for yourself. When you protect your leisure time and are able to engage in leisure pursuits, you are protecting, managing, and perhaps even improving your mental health.

Coping with Depression Through Leisure

A fairly recent research article highlighted some of the ways in which individuals living with depression benefited from leisure (Nimrod et al., 2012). Particular activities such as exercise, yoga, outdoor recreation, and social interaction, were identified by individuals who were part of an on-line communities of individuals with depression as beneficial for coping. Leisure activities were found by some individuals to enhance their mood

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Even though there are a handful of reasons why folks commit suicide, one of the grand causes of suicide is likely to be a state of poor mental health... a major depressive episode, and rates of depression are higher among women than men

and help them to feel better about themselves (e.g., improve self-confidence or self-esteem).

Some individuals used leisure (e.g., creative activities and social leisure) as a way to release their emotions and found this helpful. For others, involvement in leisure activities provided a sense of purpose or accomplishment and that sense of purpose was key in reducing their feelings of misery. A common theme – individuals experiencing depression perceived that activities that were related to their interests could provide positive effects in helping them cope with depression.

Not all leisure activities are created equal when it comes to coping with depression, however.

Unfortunately, some individuals engage in leisure activities that are detrimental to their health to cope with depression. For example, drinking alcohol, using drugs, gambling, smoking, shopping compulsively, and overusing media are all activities people can use to cope with depression. These leisure activities could be dangerous to one's physical or psychological health...and to one's pocketbook. The use of these leisure activities tended to be viewed as strategies to avoid "challenging and problematic situations" (Nimrod et al., 2012, p. 432) and were perceived as problematic behaviors that would not lead to resolving the depression.

As Nimrod et al. (2012) discuss, those who intentionally engage in healthy uses of leisure for coping benefit from "durable rewards. It may reduce stress and provide relief and even improvement in one's condition. The unhealthy use [of leisure] often provides immediate relief, but it may be harmful in the long term" (p. 442).

Need for Understanding and

Education about the Role of Leisure

One of the things that is particularly unfortunate about engaging in leisure as part of managing depression or any other mental illness is public perception. In particular, those on medical leave who are "caught" bowling or taking a vacation often face judgement. I've witnessed the judgement of others – "If she's well enough to go on vacation, she must be well enough to be at work." Because of this judgement, many people feel the need to "hide" (or are even expected to hide) these experiences or not discuss them. They may not feel safe talking about how great it felt to go to a movie or a concert to take their mind off things or how relaxing it was to take a week away at a cottage or how volunteering their time gave them a sense of purpose. And so the isolation continues and opportunities for awareness and education are stifled.

At every opportunity I have, I speak up against those attitudes which seem to come mainly from lack of understanding of the complexity of depression. I try to help others understand that leisure activities and experiences are effective ways to manage one's mental health. I am bothered when others expect those with mental illnesses to fade into the

shadows – to quietly recover or to only discuss medical therapies (e.g., medication, talk therapy). However, it is heartening to read that in Nimrod et al.'s (2012) study, members of online communities offered a "place" where those experiencing depression could receive support, encouragement, and recommendations in terms of leisure as a coping strategy. My hope is that over time, members of non-online communities who are not experiencing depression will become more aware of the benefits and value of leisure and provide similar support and encouragement.

For those who cannot afford leisure activities, it is important that others advocate for them. Not everyone who experiences depression can afford to take yoga classes, go to movies, or engage in other pursuits that may help them to cope with depression. Some may not even be able to access on-line communities. Highlighting the benefits of leisure pursuits for mental health service providers and pushing for all individuals to have access to recreation and leisure opportunities is important work toward helping protect people from experiencing depression and offering those who experience it non-medical means of coping and managing.

But this only happens if we talk. ■





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NEZHA HAYAT:

MIRRORING EXCELLENCE IN FEMALE LEADERSHIP

Nezha Hayat, is the founder and deputy chair of the Association des femmes' chefs d'entreprises du Marocis pacesetter in leadership. She believes that leadership cannot be fully explained without it being expressed by a woman, therefore, she relentlessly pushes for more women to play decision-making roles in the Moroccan economy. This desire for leadership was propelled by her background, growing up in an environment that supports financial independence at an early stage, regardless of the gender.

Association des femmes' chefs d'entreprises du Maroc; is the first women's professional association to obtain the certificate of ISO 9001 in 2008 for its activities. The Association was founded on 28 September 2000 and operates with determination and selflessness in promoting female entrepreneurship in the country.

Her desire to showcase the outstanding leadership traits in women led to the creation of "Le Club des femmes administrateurs au Maroc" in 2012, which helps to promote women in corporate boards. She was brought to the spotlight as a trailblazer in a competitive patriarchal system when she became the first woman on board of a major bank in Morocco; Morocco's Capital Market Authority.

Hayat graduated from ESSEC Paris (An international higher education institution located in France).

In 1984, after her graduation from ESSEC Hayat started her career in Spain where she functioned in a few management positions before returning to her home country Morocco, in 1993. She also held a leadership position as a deputy director of Banque Nationale de Paris offshore unit in Tangier 1993. She is a founding member and Vice-Chair of AFEM (the Moroccan Association of Female Company Senior Executives). In Spain, she served at the international division of Banco Atlantico, responsible for international risks and restructured debt portfolio. She served in this capacity from 1985 -1988.

In 1999, she was elected President of the Association of stockbrokers in Morocco during two mandates. She was also nominated as a global leader for tomorrow by the World Economic Forum in 2001.

Hayat being a woman with a consistent passion for service was appointed as president of the AMMC back in February 2016 by King Mohammed VI. Until her nomination, she worked at Société Générale Morocco group and in 2007, she became the first woman on a management board of a bank in the country.

Hayat also serves on the

executive board of the Banque Societe Generale in Morocco. She is the founder of Morocco's club of women corporate directors. She is the chairperson and CEO of the Moroccan Capital Market Authority. As the chairperson, she led her company to launch guidelines on corporate social responsibility and Environmental, Social Governance which was aimed at helping and encouraging companies to pursue sustainable development; thereby fulfilling the passion she has always had to give back to the society.

Hayat was also elected vice-president of the Regional Committee for Africa and the Middle East (AMERC) of the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO). From 1988 to 1990, she was in charge of the department of corporate finance in two brokerage houses in Madrid (Inverfinanzas and then Bravo y Garayalde), while she moved to private banking activities in 1990 as the branch manager of Banco inversion in Marbella. She was chairperson and CEO of Sogelease (Société Générale Morocco group

Her desire to spearhead a global change in female leadership inspired the force towards every step of leadership she took as she continues to remain an epitome of excellence in female leadership. ■



Nisreen & Nermeen Abu Dail

THE SISTERS OF SCULPTURE EMBROIDERY

When embroidery is mentioned, we often think of the different fabrics that are usable and the intricate designs that go on these fabrics to produce an entirely stunning piece of cloth.

For Jordanian sisters, Nisreen and Nermeen Abu Dail, incorporating embroidery with sculpture has become their very unique medium to create exquisite and elegant pieces. Their works which has incorporated a blend of Contemporary and Traditional Arabic basics to all their designs has taken the world of sculptural architecture by surprise.

Founded in 2010, Naqsh Collective has grown into a collection of furniture and household pieces combining new and cutting-edge technology with an architectural feel in their inspiration to give their designs “soul”.

The sisters, each with the work strengths have put their talents together to create all their designs; Nisreen is an Architect by training which gives her the knowledge and view on how to merge art and design seamlessly, while Nermeen has a degree working as an excellent graphics designer. Both sisters with their respective backgrounds work together to create pieces that have been featured at so many exhibitions and events. In a statement, Nermeen said “Nisreen is an architect and I am a graphic designer so we somehow complement each other when we make one piece. Like you see her lines and you see my chaotic world of shapes that come together and form something”.

In most designs created by the sisters, there is always an element of their heritage embedded in it to give it a feel and vibe that relates with the Arabic culture. Before settling

for the widely known embroidery designs, the sisters had earlier tried to work using Islamic patterns and calligraphy. For them, working with embroidery is more expressive and can be replicated or adapted to reflect the intent of their designs.

For Nermeen, she is excited by how much the art of embroidery has moved from India through to Pakistan, Jordan, and Syria, with each stop incorporating its patterns and motifs into the designs. This is why they are particular about the Naqsh Collective because it showcases the rich Arabian heritage with a modern twist on a contemporary medium like furniture.

The collection, Wihdeh Collection as designed by the sisters uses embroidery to create low table units cut from stone and marble to give it beautiful and stunning finishing. For the tables, a large amount of materials for the sisters’ home country is used like the basalt to tell a long-lasting story of Arabic history whilst reflecting the spirit of unity. Nisreen always tells people she takes a piece of Jordan whenever she travels, referring to the massively abundant Jordanian stone, Basalt. The stone is quite rare across the world but exists in large amounts in Jordan and very common during the Roman period to build large amphitheaters and columns.

Nisreen and Nermeen Abu Dail are proud of their heritage and are always enthusiastic when they have to work a new design; it means they can work on a piece that will showcase the rich history of Jordan in its designs. Art for them is expressive, and their chosen media helps them to show how they feel about their heritage. ■

LOOK FASHIONABLE ON A BUDGET

By: Boma Benjy -Iwuoha

We all know the phrase, “Looking good is good business” and of course, your budget will determine how much you can spend on clothes. It’s not farfetched to say that many ladies have limited budgets for fashion though we tend to over stretch it sometimes; the bottom line is, we don’t all have limitless fashion budgets. However, with a better eye for quality and a few after-purchase fixes, you can find budget clothes that still make you feel good and comfortable regardless of how much you paid for them.

On the list below, Jacqueline Curtis highlights 9 Ways to Make Your Clothes Look More Expensive & Fashionable



See a Tailor

Women are hesitant to have their clothes tailored. Many believe that tailoring is expensive; however, in my experience, a simple tailoring fix (such as nipping in a waist or letting down a hem) usually costs very little but it makes your clothes look like a million bucks. Designers have the luxury of fitting clothes on models that are one specific size and shape.



The average woman has much more average measurements, and therefore clothes are rarely a perfect fit right off the rack. A dress that doesn't fit your waist or a pair of pants that are a little too long can make even expensive clothes look dowdy and cheap. By investing a few dollars on tailoring a bargain shopping score, your clothes fit your body better, which automatically

creates the sense of better quality.

Launder Properly

You know that tag on the inside of your shirt? It's not just there to tell you what size you're wearing. All mass-market garments come with laundering instructions that should be followed to make the clothing last longer and look better.

Fading, wrinkling, and shrinking are all telltale signs of cheap clothes. However, you can fool everyone by taking great care with all of your garments. Always check your clothing tags to find out how best to care for your clothes so they stay



Never wash clothes at home that specify "dry-clean only"

Wear clothes a few times before you wash them to maintain color and shape

Invest in a drying rack for garments that fade and change shape in the dryer, such as jeans and dresses

Store out-of-season clothes in a cool, dark place

Blot (don't rub) stains out of fabric, since rubbing can ruin clothing fibers

Just by paying attention to laundering your clothes properly, you help them maintain color, shape, and quality, even if you nabbed those pants from the clearance rack.

crisp, bright, and expensive-looking.

Here are some general clothes washing tips:

Always wash clothes with like colors, especially dark colors that can fade easily

Run a disposable razor over wool clothes to remove pilling

Look for Workmanship

When I'm bargain-hunting and see something I love, the first things I look at are the buttons and zippers. Even cheap clothes should have sturdy workmanship, or you'll risk ruined clothes, fallen hems, and loose threads. Always check out the fasteners first: Does the zipper close

smoothly? Are there loose buttons and threads? Then, check the seams of the garment for holes and loose threads as well, which are signs that the garment is poorly made and will likely fall apart or lose its shape.

Finally, do a once-over for stains or holes that could have been introduced from other people trying on the item in the store. While some stains (makeup, for example) can usually be washed out, you should be able to find another sans stains.

Avoid Embellishments and Logos

We all love a little sparkle in our lives, but if you're going for beading and sequins, you risk your clothes looking cheap. This happens for a couple of reasons: First, embellishments can wear over time, which means that beaded sweatshirt is going to look dowdy and old when some of that beautiful beading falls off. Second, embellishments simply aren't as lasting trend-wise as a crisp, clean look. Sure, that pair of embroidered jeans might look great this season, but a pair of tailored, dark-wash jeans is much more timeless. The same can be said for logos. Logos are often used as a statement in fashion, meant to declare that the item was expensive. And while you can find deals on logo-emblazoned clothing and accessories, I think a well-made, faux brown leather bag always looks more expensive than one covered in a loud logo.

Avoid Trends

One thing about trends is that, over time, they'll fade away into the same place "Hammer Pants" and butterfly hair clips went to die. If you really want to make your clothes look more expensive, focus on purchasing classic pieces that never go out of style.

My must-have classic wardrobe staples look something like this:

A pair of dark-wash, straight-leg jeans

A well-tailored button-up shirt

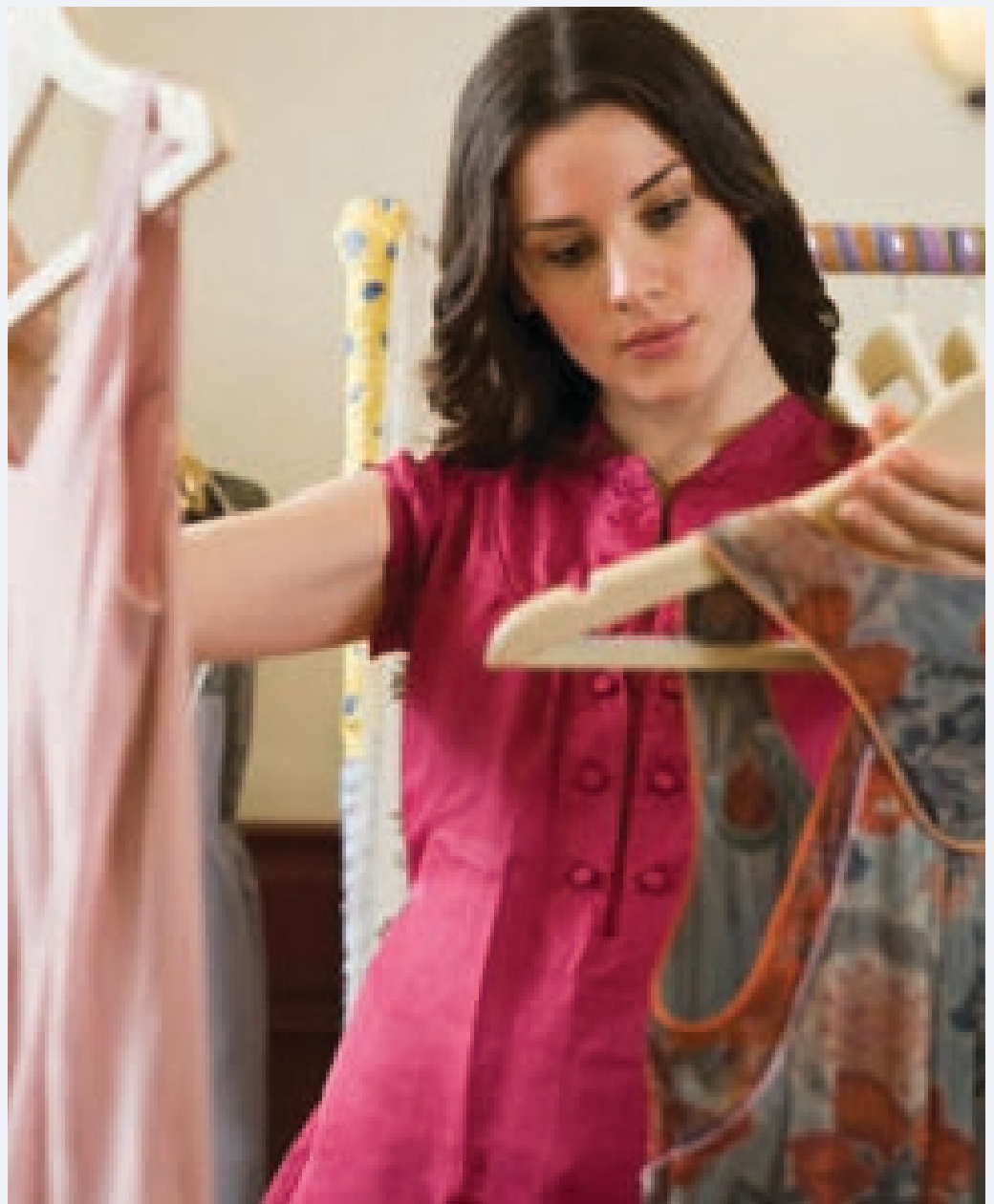
A little black dress

A classic mid-length trench

A pair of black pumps

A v-neck sweater

These items have all been staples



for decades and are unlikely to go out of style anytime soon. By skipping the trends, you can avoid spending money on cheap duplicates and instead focus your clothing budget on items that always look current and well-made.

Mix with Pricey-Looking Accessories

You don't have to completely go bargain basement when trying to save money on clothes. If you tend to shop for bargains during clearance sales for your main clothes, it's okay to splurge on accessories to elevate your entire look. Or, if your budget is tight, accessories that look expensive can achieve the same goal. Take a basic outfit of a white V-neck t-shirt and jeans. Not too exciting right? But add a colorful scarf, a statement-making pair of earrings, and a

cross-body bag, and suddenly the outfit goes from boring to lunch date. Or, swap the scarf for a hefty collar-shaped necklace and don a pair of heels for a Friday night look.

Accessories are a great place to allot some of your clothing budget because they can change an entire look. They're also ideal for testing a trend without spending a large amount of money on something that might go out of style soon. A good rule of thumb for purchasing accessories that look expensive is to go for something that isn't too obviously fake. A huge necklace made of cheap gemstones would be out of your price range if it were made from real diamonds, but a nice pair of cubic zirconia stud earrings is more realistic, so they actually look more expensive when worn because they're not obviously fake.

Go Monochromatic

One surefire way to look cheap is to pile on a ton of different colors and patterns. While I definitely love a splash of color, wearing a monochromatic tone from head to toe creates an idea of quality. You don't have to wear head-to-toe black, but an outfit made from different shades of gray looks sophisticated and expensive.

Neutral colors look best for this trick: White worn with shades of khaki, or dark-wash jeans worn with a lighter chambray top easily trick others into thinking you spent a fortune on pieces that can be found at a huge discount. A couple of rules for wearing monochromatic outfits:

If you're wearing one shade head-to-toe (instead of different shades of the same color), break it up by mixing textures, such as silk, denim, cotton, or leather.

When in doubt, go for black – it's the easiest color to dress up to look expensive, and will always be in style. One of the most exciting things happening in fashion is the sheer



accessibility of texture. Leather, animal, and even the softest wool are no longer limited to the uber-rich, even if the cheaper versions aren't genuine. A little (faux) texture can go a long way in elevating an outfit to "expensive" status.

Look for ways to introduce some texture to your overall outfit. I love python as a print: It always looks expensive when worn as a shoe or handbag. Faux leather accents are another way cheaper clothes look more expensive, so I love leather panels or a super-soft faux leather bag. Just remember that a little texture is enough to create a pricier look, so you don't need to pile on multiple animal prints or a ton of different textures – that could cause the opposite effect.

Pay Attention to Grooming

If you really want to make your clothes look expensive, make sure the rest of your look is up to par. It's much easier to make clothes look a million bucks if you match them with a flawless blowout, a chip-free manicure, and clean, neutral makeup.

You don't have to hit the salon on the daily to make sure

you have a million-dollar look. Instead, it's about a clean, classic aesthetic: It's pretty hard to look expensive with a ton of turquoise eye shadow and the latest trendy polka-dot manicure. Instead, go for neutral colors and remember that a well-done beige manicure trumps a sloppy design any day, no matter how expensive the outfit. A classic look never goes out of style.

Final Word

Whether your monthly clothing budget is \$50, \$100, \$1,000, or \$10,000, the old saying is true: Fashion fades, but style is forever. Don't let a small clothing budget fool you into thinking you're not stylish. By paying attention to the quality of even your clearance rack finds, you can make sure that your clothes last, look great, and, most importantly, make you feel like a million bucks when you wear them.



WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS ARE STILL FACED WITH UNDER-CAPITALIZATION AND GENDER BIAS

By Miracle Nwankwo



“I think you should focus on your role as a wife and mother”.

Those were the words Beatrice received from a bank manager while bidding for a loan to start up a business. She had walked home unhappy under the scorching sun, again – she had been turned down by the bank that refused to give her a loan to start up her business.

Each time Beatrice visits the bank, they give her one hundred and one reasons why they think her business will never succeed. On this particular day she

asked to see the bank manager who had conversed with her, and bluntly told her “we usually do not invest in women-owned businesses because we don’t think that they could sustain the pressure of growing a business, I think you should focus on your role as a wife and mother”. She was stunned at his response and repeatedly asked herself how those self-made female business tycoons made it to the top?

“Did they actually pass through this process?” “Or is it just me?” Beatrice wondered.



Like Beatrice, many female entrepreneurs around the world have shared similar experiences. They claim that they had no shortage of innovation or business ideas but the major barrier is undercapitalization and gender bias. Testimonies of many female entrepreneurs, about how they started their businesses, and the difficulties they faced, have reflected a similar pattern, they lack access to funding and support from the government, banks, and the incubator communities. Women have posited that being a woman entrepreneur comes with different hurdles than those of their male counterparts.

Shelley True of TrueDotDesign also gave her account of how she was turned down several times by money lenders and banks. “I had to go to a number of lenders and banks and was turned down several times, for no real reason.” Even when she exceeded the revenue numbers the banks demanded approval, “they still turned me down” she said.

Gender barrier is a normal challenge faced by women entrepreneurs while trying to start or grow their businesses, which has also resulted in the loss of confidence among many women in the business world. Each time this happens many women tend to give up on their business ideas, projects and dreams, just because they couldn’t find capital. The journey to the top for many women in business is filled with potholes and when once that can be avoided; the woman entrepreneur would be able to achieve success.

A particular school of thought is raising the notion against the amount of effort exerted on the push for gender equality, saying that the movement has gone too far. Hearing this for the first time, you might want to pause and take a closer look at the meaning of that assertion, but how convincing can that be? When there are still women all over the world complaining about the struggles they go through in the business world based on their gender.

People often argue that most Western societies have achieved gender equality and women have all the same legal rights as men, but on the other hand, feminists continue to argue that the battle for gender equality is not yet won.

The curiosity about this matter is why the banks, investors and governments have failed to believe in the women. Different people are of different opinions as to why these things happen, but one of the common opinions is Gender Discrimination.

Even while the government claimed to have created various programs that are aimed at helping women entrepreneurs, many women still find the government programs to be inherently biased.

Speaking about the Government bias programmes, Jennifer Schoenhofer, the CEO and president of Axis Teknologies, a wireless infrastructure engineering firm in Marietta, Ga said “the federal government’s program to award 5 percent of contracts to wom-

en-owned businesses annually is meager compared with the roughly 15 percent that minority business owners can get, – That in itself is inequality to me,” she stressed.

Despite the programs, training, grants, and support that female entrepreneurs have at their disposals, this debate still heats like a thunderbolt whenever it is raised. This issue appeals to every woman in the business world irrespective of the country or region they are from. It is a general problem, considering the various annual listings of world billionaires, there is a clear observation about that these listings are male dominated.

Should the women give up and let things happen the way they will?

That will be a bad idea because women play a huge role in the current world’s economy; it is therefore unfair to understate the importance of female entrepreneurs in any economy of the world.

Women are highly ambitious and often start their career at a young age. They cover many spheres of life from the media to fashion, sales, banking and many more. Presently there is no sector that is void of a woman.

The gap between men and women rights to many of life advantages is still wide including the business sphere. Women entrepreneur are still faced with trials and tribulations of fundraising and gender bias, which means that there should be more room for the continuity of the gender equality pursuit. ■

ON BEING “MRS. NOBODY”!

K e m b e t B o l t o n

I have gone out on social occasions alone long enough to know that a woman, who goes about her life solo, is it's kind of oppression. I have always enjoyed my own company and want to be by myself the majority of the time. This, of course, is not to say I don't enjoy the company of others. I have great companions from my place of worship, work, etc., but will always have picked my own company if it was presented in a scale of preference.



It was one of those hectic days at work. I had resumed before 8.am and barely had ten minutes break the whole day. I was on my feet half of the time and my toe hurt badly from pressure from the heels. I had to deal with a lot of finicky clients and could feel the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) symptoms coming down.

Swamped as I was, pleasant thoughts of my planned evening gave me a smile to myself from time to time. Okay, one of my resolutions for the New Year was to always give myself a treat, at least once in 2 weeks. See a movie, have a drink or attend a ceremony.

This particular Friday was my first planned outing for the year.

My neighbor had been going on and on about the spiced snails in a particular joint in town. “It is to die for” she had said as her face lit and then suddenly turned solemn like she was ready to give her life for those snails. The snail was not the only reason to visit this joint, the life band was classic, I learned my folk songs were a regular and since I was away from home, I longed



for things that give me the home nostalgia.

As the clock chimed and it was 6; pm, I heaved and started to clear my desk. I was going to have a wonderful “me time” and could not just wait to have my evening.

The traffic was not particularly heavy this evening, and in less than 30 minutes I had reached my destination joint. The car park was jammed and I had to wait for about ten minutes for someone to pull out so I could park. I smiled and waved at the astonished driver who could not understand what my excitement was about. It seemed as if the spot was for sale and I had just been given one for free.

I securely locked my laptop and other valuables in the car booth and with a leisurely stroll went into the garden.

There was a security screening point with some huge agelastic looking security guards. Good evening, I greeted trying a quick smile out of curiosity to know if those faces could ever smile. The face position seemed sculptured as if it will never bulge. Hi, one of them responded, while searching my bag like I had a bomb the size of a mustard grain hidden therein. Who are you with; he continued without even looking at me, still fixated on the contents of my bag, looking at every bit of make-up item like it had some bomb laced on it.

I honestly did not understand the question, I looked around and when I did not see anyone else around he could have been referring to, responded “I am by myself”.

Sorry, we do not admit unaccompanied ladies here, he retorted, stretching back my handbag to me with a look of “you just wasted my time with the search.”

The first retort that came to heart was not a pleasant one. Always count to five in your mind before you respond my dad has always advised. 1, .2, 3,.....4.....5, Why? I responded calmly.

This place is not a brothel, we don’t want young ladies like you coming here unaccompanied to attract men, you have to come with your husband or boyfriend to gain entrance here.

Patience is a virtue, I agreed that day. Count again, I said to myself. 1..2...,3....4.....,5.....but I am single, I responded calmly. I neither have a husband nor boyfriend to escort me, but seriously need to unwind and calm my nerves, I’ve had a long day, I said, almost pleading.

Young lady, leave this place, another guard shouted from behind. Do not make us throw you out.

I was getting angry, my voice was not so calm again, throw me out? What will be my offense? I did

not see his response coming, your offense is being “Mrs. Nobody”.

There are days when I could have had my way or disrupt business activities there for the rest of the evening. That particular Friday was not one of such days. I was sapped of all energy. I collected my bag and walked back to my car with a thousand thoughts flowing through my mind.

I will be back, I told myself, I will still come back here alone and will gain entrance, have my drink and peppered snail, watch entertainers perform my folk songs, and unwind before going home.

Not just today.

As I got home and discussed this incident with my friends, I realized it wasn’t new and not just the place in question was guilty of this harassment to unaccompanied ladies. I was rudely surprised and decided to look up ‘my rights’ on this issue. Guess what I found? Nothing.

But in the course of my reading, I discovered I was not alone.

A lot of young women have faced this kind of harassment and have suffered discrimination based on their relationship status. Stories of visa denials, being passed over for appointments and sometimes even employment based on marital status abound.

According to an article found on Arab News; the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (Haia) has officially prevented women from visiting medical clinics without male guardians. Haia members recently issued orders to employees working at a nutrition center not to admit women patients unless a guardian accompanies them during their weekly visits. This decision caused huge losses to the nutrition center in a single week, according to the source.

In defense of their stance, the proponents of the law stated that male guardians must not only be husbands but could also be any male relatives like sons, brothers, fathers or even uncles. “HOW THOUGHTFUL”.

What this means is that, I have to wait for my elderly father or my brothers who all live 10 hours away from me to get checked medically or like was the case with me, hire a male or call an unwanted male friend to accompany me before I could relax, unwind and spend my own money.

I tried a different venue the following day and was admitted (Thankfully), but I had to wait for about 10 minutes and when I did

not see any waiter coming my way, I beckoned on one and placed my order. Just one portion? The waiter asked in a sincerely curious voice. I briefly wondered if he had looked at my huge body frame and thought a portion will not be okay for me. I was curious to see where the drama was leading? Just one I responded, why? I thought you will want to order for “Oga” (Male partner) at once so I do not have to go back and forth when he comes, the almost shaky waiter murmured. There is no “Oga” I responded, please can you get my order? Sorry, ma he whispered as he jolted away.

I could see people looking at me with condescending pity because I was unaccompanied. Paradoxically, I looked at them and felt pity that they needed to have company to enjoy themselves. Why would I want to pay for my much-hyped “Spiced Snail” or get to pay for a movie ticket if I have to try to hold up a forced conversation that distracts me from savoring the reason I’m there?

I have been alone in public places long enough to note the different treatment I am given when I am with “someone and when I’m not.

These are small matters.

How about the bigger stuff like strange men trying to have forced conversations with you and getting rude when you show no interest or strange men following you when you depart? It gets harder.

Being a woman who goes about her life “solo” is it’s kind of oppression.

Why are women expected to be accompanied in spaces where social activity occurs?

This has so become the norm that, when you are not accompanied, even kind, well-meaning people find it hard to address you respectfully.

It doesn’t have to be this way.

Who else has had to endure unfair treatment in a social event for being a “Mrs. Nobody”?

What should be done about this? Are there legal rights or bodies for complaints in cases of such harassment?

If you have thoughts and opinions on this article, kindly send via email to editor@amazonswatchmagazine.com. ■



A RESILIENCE THAT BREEDS SUCCESS



While gender equality in the government sector still proves elusive, and female leadership is almost non-existent in the top echelons of the ruling Communist, some parts of the Asian continent still boast of self-made women who have navigated their way to the top regardless of the unfair economy. Not only are self-made Chinese women growing in global prominence, but the contribution of Chinese women to the economy at all levels has increased greatly in recent years.

One of the remarkable women on this list of global successes in the midst of hardship is, Zhou Qunfei, a Chinese entrepreneur who founded the major touchscreen maker Lens Technology Company. A careful examination of the background of this successful Amazon makes it obvious that the milestone of success which she has built were primarily achieved through perseverance. Zhou was a high school dropout and a former factory worker who grew up in a small village in central China. She experienced the hard bite of life as she lost her mum at the tender age of five. Her father became partially blinded and lost a finger in an industrial accident.

All these sad experiences were not good enough reasons to make Zhou Qunfei give up on life. She picked up herself and did all sought of dirty menial jobs to help her family survive through life. At age 16 Zhou was forced to leave high school in order to provide for her family.

She secured a job at a factory making watch lenses for about \$1 a day and through hard work and determination, she struck out on her own at age 22. With only \$3,000 in her pocket, Zhou and a few relatives started a workshop, making watch lenses for customers, after she had learnt the trade from a small watch glass making factory in Shenzhen. This then seemed to be the beginning of Zhou Qunfei's tale of from rags to riches. She paid so much diligence to her glass making factory, so much so that she got involved in every operation of the company and became proficient in each of it, including the repairs and creating improved designs of factory machinery.

Her companies' profit rapidly increased when she took the life changing decision to begin making glass screens for mobile phones. In 2003, she launched Lens Technology, developing the start-up into the touch-screen sector's dominant player, supplying products made by leading electronics giants including Apple, Samsung and Huawei. As she began to attain these admirable feats, she hit so much bigger challenges. Twice she had to sell her house to pay her employees' salaries, but through much more resilience and confidence she successfully pushed off these barriers on her way to success. Never did she stop learning and making her way out of her predicament. Zhou, found fame after Lens debuted on Shenzhen's

ChiNext A-share market on March 18. In March 2015, Zhou's Lens Technology had the big boom, and today the company is valued at \$11.4 billion and is currently said to have over 82,000 employees across China.

As a successful entrepreneur with many people looking up to her, Zhou inspires upcoming entrepreneurs, teaching them to persevere, especially in most difficult times. Summarizing the success of this business mogul the words "determination and courage" cannot be omitted, since Zhou Qunfei knew how to pull out what she needed from life and not just accepting whatsoever life threw at her.

Zhou also has a very interesting family life; she married her former factory boss, had a daughter, and divorced. Her daughter is currently studying overseas. In 2008, she married Zheng Junlong a longtime factory colleague who currently serves on the Lens board in the company. They have a seven-year-old son who lives at their Hong Kong family home. The family owns a \$27 million estate in Hong Kong.

Zhou has stated that although she considers work to be her hobby, she also enjoys mountain climbing and ping pong. Zhou Qunfei's rags-to-riches story has been credited as an inspiration to the millions of migrant workers in China as she consistently showcases the rare resilience that breeds success. ■

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